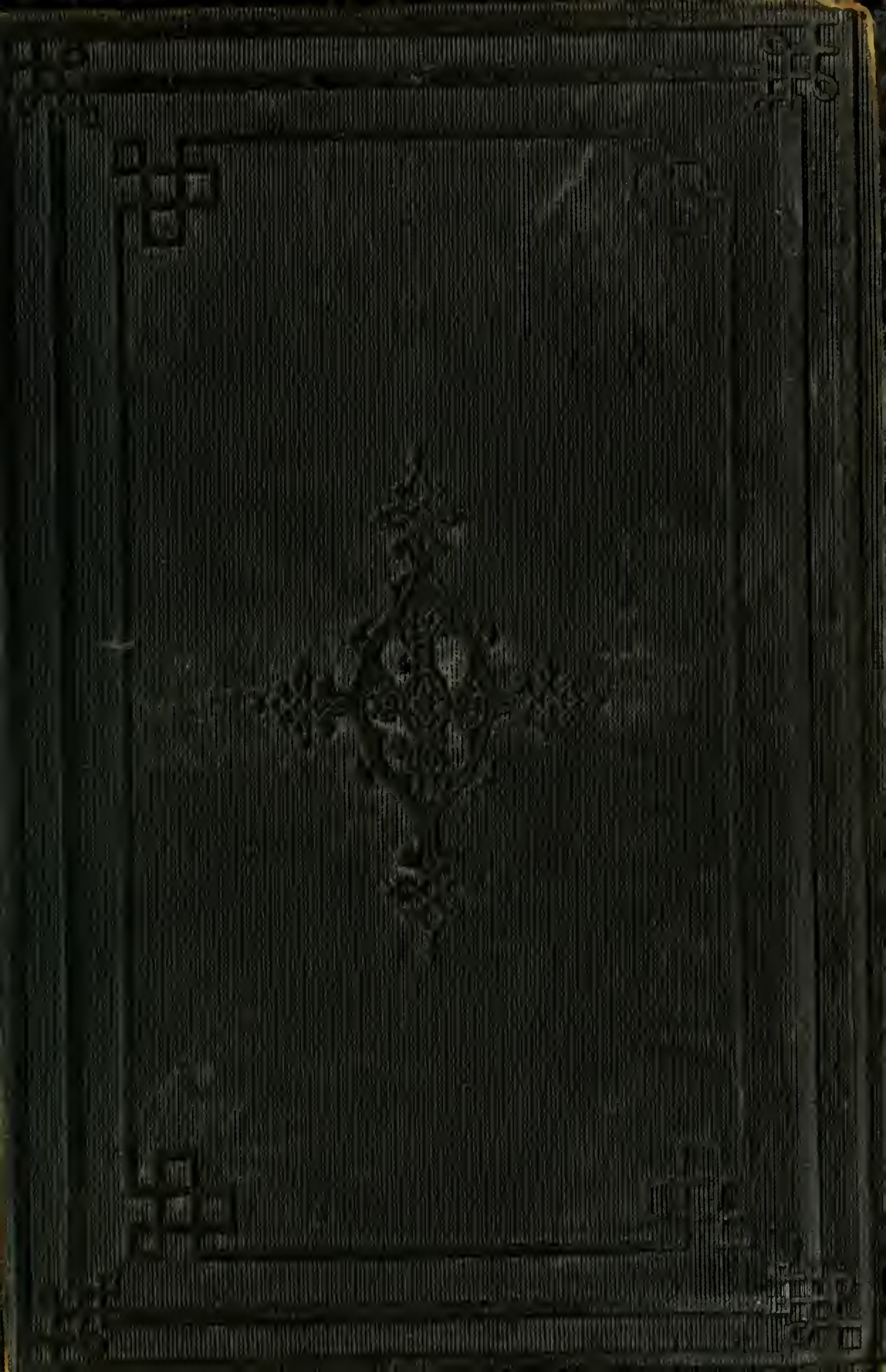

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THE

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VOLUME VI.

A MAN MADE OF MONEY,

AND

THE CHRONICLES OF CLOVERNOOK.

A MAN MADE OF MONEY,

AND

THE CHRONICLES OF CLOVERNOOK.

BY

DOUGLAS JERROLD.

LONDON
BRADBURY AND EVANS, 11, BOUVERIE STREET.
1853.

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I HAVE little to say by way of PREFACE to the contents of this volume. If they do not make their own way to the good graces of the reader, no note of introduction or recommendation at my hand can serve them. THE MAN MADE OF MONEY must even take his chance: to be set aside as a mere phantasm of the imagination; a Jack-o'-lanthorn of the fancy; or, haply, as a thing of some social substance and work-day meaning in this our best possible world of Bank paper. Hence, MR. JERICHO may be either a wan shadow or a vital presence.

THE CHRONICLES OF CLOVERNOOK will also be deemed as mere Chronicles of Goose-quill; or accepted as a fragmentary record of a region no less real than the earth that is trod upon, because only visited on wings. The Hermit may carry his twenty stone of flesh, and as much of spirituality as the reader will allow him to uplift the down-dragging burthen. For of this is the load and the lightening of life.

REGENT'S PARK, *June* 28, 1853.

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A MAN MADE OF MONEY.

CHAPTER I.

"Mr. Jericho, when can you let me have some money?"

This curious question was coldly put by a gentlewoman in morning undress to a man in gown and slippers. The reader, who is always permitted to wear the old cloak of the old stage mystery—the cloak that maketh invisible—must at once perceive the tender relation that lives and flourishes between the interesting person who puts this familiar interrogative, and the being who suffers it. They are man and wife. The marriage certificate is legible in every line of Mrs. Jericho's face. She asks for money with a placid sense of right; it may be, strengthened by the assurance that her debtor cannot escape her. For it is a social truth the reader may not have overlooked, that if a man be under his own roof, he must be at home to his own wife.

"I ask again, Mr. Jericho, when can you let me have some money?"

Mr. Jericho made no answer. He could not precisely name the time; and he knew that whatever promise he made, its performance would be sternly exacted of him by the female then demanding. Whereupon, Mr. Jericho laid down his pen, and resignedly upturned his eyeballs to the ceiling.

"When—can—you—let—me—have—some—money?"

There is a terrible sort of torture, the manner of which is to let fall cold water drop by drop upon the shaven head of the sufferer. We think Mrs. Jericho had never heard of this cruelty; and we are almost prepared to be bound for her, that she would have suffered herself to be cut into little diamond pieces ere, knowing the mode of torment, she would in any way have imitated it. And upon her incorporate self too—her beloved husband! Impossible. Nevertheless love, in its very idleness—like a giddy and rejoicing kitten—will sometimes wound when most playful. The tiny, tender claws *will* now and then transgress the fur.

Mrs. Jericho, without at all meaning it, distilled the question, letting it fall, cold syllable by cold syllable, upon the naked ear of her husband. Mr. Jericho bounced up in his chair ; and then, like a spent ball, dropt dumbly down again. He had for a few moments raised himself above the earthy and material query of Mrs. Jericho, and with his eyes fixed upon the ceiling, was contemplating an antipodean fly that, holding on with the rest of his legs, was passing two of them over his head and collar-bone, as flies are accustomed curiously to do. Mr. Jericho—so rapid is thought, especially when followed by a creditor—Mr. Jericho had already taken refuge in the republic of flies—for that flies, unlike bees, are not monarchical, is plain to any man who contemplates their equality and familiarity in his sugar-basin and other places—and was beginning to envy the condition of that domestic insect that had the run of his house, the use of his very finest furniture, gratis,—when he, the nominal master, the apparent possessor thereof, had truly no lawful hold thereupon.

What shall we say of a man of a decent and compact figure, a man of middle height ; who nevertheless wishing to stand two inches taller in the world than fairly beseems him, consents to be stretched by the rack in the hope of walking the higher for the pulling ?—Now Mr. Jericho was this foolish man. He wanted to stand higher in the world than his simple means allowed him ; and he had submitted himself to the rack of debt, to be handsomely drawn out. To get appearance upon debt is, no doubt, every bit as comfortable as to get height upon the rack. The figure may be expanded ; but how the muscle of the heart, how all the joints are made to crack for it.

Mrs. Jericho—when last she spoke—dropt her question in the coldest and most measured manner. Mr. Jericho, recalled from the land of flies, with curved lips, looked silently, sternly at the life-tenant of his bosom. And now the syllables fall hotly, heavily, as drops of molten lead.

"When can I have some money ?" and Mrs. Jericho's figure naturally rose with the question.

Mr. Jericho jumped from his seat the better to measure himself with his wife's attitude. His first purpose was to swear ; the oath was ready ; but some good anatomical genius twitched a muscle, the jaw of Jericho closed, and the unuttered aspick died upon his tongue. He would not swear ; he would not enter upon that coward's privilege ; he felt the soreness of great provocation; felt that the smallest and least offensive oath would do him sudden and mysterious good. Nevertheless, he swallowed the emotion, striking his breast to keep the passion down. He would be cold as cream.

Mrs. Jericho, however, having the right of arithmetic upon her side, repeated her question; asking it with a terrible calmness, at the same time, as though to make the query stinging, waving her right hand before her husband's face with a significant and snaky motion. "When can I have some money?"

"Woman!" cried Jericho, vehemently; as though at once and for ever he had emptied his heart of the sex; and, rushing from the room, he felt himself in the flattering vivacity of the moment a single man. The transient feeling fell from him as he ran up stairs; and ere he had begun to shave, all his responsibilities returned with full weight upon him. "I'm sure, after all, I do my best to love the woman," thought Jericho, as he lathered his chin, "and yet she will ask for money."

Mrs. Jericho, baffled but not subdued, half-confessed to herself that there never was such a man; and then, beginning a little household song—familiar to families as winter robin—she thought she would go out. She wanted to make a little purchase. She had tried it before; there was nothing like shopping for lowness of spirits; and—yes, she remembered—she wanted many things. She would go forth; and—as Jericho was in his airs—she would lay out money on both sides of the street.

And Mr. Jericho, as he shaved, quietly built up the scheme of a day's pleasure for himself and three special friends. As his wife was in one of her aggravating tempers, he thought it an opportunity—sinful to let pass—to have a little quiet dinner somewhere: he could hardly decide upon the place; but a quiet banquet, at which the human heart would expand in good fellowship, and where the wine was far above a doubt.

Shopping and a dinner! Thus was the common purse to bleed in secret, and at both ends.

Mr. Jericho drest himself with unusual care. He was a man not without his whimsies; and believed that a good dinner was eaten with better enjoyment when taken in full dress. "I hold it impossible"—he would say—"quite impossible, for a man to really relish turtle in gown and slippers. No; when turtle was created, it was intended to be eaten in state; eaten by men in robes and golden chains, to a flourish or so of silver trumpets." Mrs. Jericho was fully aware of this marital superstition. Thus, when with an eye—a wife's eye—at the bed-room door, she saw her husband slide down stairs as though the bannister was buttered, she knew from his dress that it was a day out; and when the disturbed air wafted back the scent of lavender from the linen of her lord, mingled with odours from his locks, it will not surprise the student of human nature when we aver that the heart of the married woman almost sank within her.

Speedily recovering herself, Mrs. Jericho determined upon her best and brightest gown; her richest shawl; her most captivating bonnet. These things endued, she took her purse, and as the bank-paper crumbled in her resolute palm, catching a departing look at the glass, it was plain to herself that she smiled mischief.

Mrs. Jericho had the profoundest opinion of the powers of her husband: she believed him capable of any amount of money. Nevertheless, the man would reject the flattery sometimes with argument, sometimes with indignation. Again and again the husband assured his wife, he must—and no help for it—die a beggar; but the woman armed her heart with incredulity—she laughed, and would not believe it. Indeed, it seemed her one purpose to show and to preach an inextinguishable belief in the pocket of her husband. Everywhere she made converts. Tradesmen bowed down to her and believed her. On all sides, dealers—cautious, knowing men, made circumspect by wives and children—humbled themselves at the door of her pony phaeton, taking orders. Mrs. Jericho did so possess them with a faith in Jericho, that had she required the doorway to be laid with velvet or cachemire, there would have been no scruple of hesitation in the dealer; the footcloth would have been surely opened out, and put down. Moreover, Mrs. Jericho was aided by her two daughters whom, on her second marriage, she had handsomely presented to Mr. Jericho; further enhancing the gift with a son; a young gentleman declared by the partiality of friends to be born for billiards.

Mr. Jericho was forty when he married; therefore that, in one day, he should find himself the father of three children, was taking the best means to make up for the negligence of former years.

Mrs. Captain Pennibacker was made a widow at two-and-twenty by an East Indian bullet; but it was not until she had laboured for eight years to become calm about Pennibacker, that she fluttered towards Jericho. And thus, at one blow, she made him her second husband, and the second father of Pennibacker's son and daughters. Offering such treasures to Mr. Solomon Jericho, she naturally thought he could not make too much of them. And for a season Mr. Jericho showed a proper sense of his good fortune; yet, though his wife would never fail to assure him that he possessed a priceless treasure in herself and children, as time wore on, the ungrateful man would now and then look doubtfully at the family jewels.

Somehow, the Pennibackers failed to see in Mr. Jericho a flesh and blood father-in-law. From their earliest introduction to him, they considered him as they would consider a rich plum cake; to be sliced, openly or by stealth, among them. As they grew up, Mr. Jericho merely held in their opinion the situation of the person who paid the bills. It was, we say, the household superstition that Jericho had an unknown amount of wealth. Hence, he met with little thanks for what he gave; for the recurring thought would still condemn him for what he kept back. He possessed a sea of money; and yet he was mean enough to filter his gold by drops. In a word, he never gave anything that he, the donor, did not appear to the son or daughter receiving, the paltriest of human creatures.

And let the truth be said. Mr. Jericho was persecuted by the natural growth of his own falsehood. If at home he sat upon thorns, from his own tongue had dropt the seed that produced the punishment. In early times he had sown, broadcast, notions of his abounding wealth; and the pleasant lies, as lies will do, had come up prickles. They grew thick in his daily path. Scarcely could he set foot forth without treading upon them.

The widow Pennibacker, it will at once be understood, had married Jericho wholly and solely for the sake of her children. It was, at the cost of any personal sacrifice, a duty she owed her infants to provide them with a wealthy father. She herself—and we seek, we ask no other testimony than her own declaration—she would have been only too happy to join the dear deceased. But she had a duty to fulfil—a stern duty that held her to the earth. And she shrank not from its performance. No; suppressing her higher feelings, she gave her hand to Solomon Jericho, and chastised herself to think with calmness upon Pennibacker in his Indian tomb. She offered up—it was her frequent expression to all her bosom friends—she offered up the feelings of the widow to the duties of the mother. For what a man was Pennibacker! Especially in his grave. But such indulgent thought softens even asperity towards the departed. A natural and wholesome tenderness. The grave is the true purifier, and in the charity of the living, takes away the blots and stains from the dead.

When widow Pennibacker was first introduced to Mr. Jericho, he was whisperingly, confidentially, recommended to her indulgent notice as—a City Gentleman. Hence, Jericho appeared to the imagination of the widow, with an indescribable glory of money about him. She was a woman of naturally a lively fancy; a quality haply cultivated by her sojourn in the East, where rajahs framed in gold and jewels upon elephants were common pictures: hence, Jericho of the City of London was instantaneously rendered by the widow a man of prodigious wealth. She gave the freest, the most imaginative translation of the words —City Gentleman. Though not handsome, he was instantly considered to be most precious. Had she looked upon the Idol Ape, Tinum Bug, whose every feature is an imperial jewel set in the thickest skull of gold, and then cast a glance at Jericho, she would, we fully believe it, have chosen the City Gentleman in preference to the idol; so far, in the dizzied judgment of an impulsive, imaginative woman, did Solomon Jericho outshine Tinum Bug.

And much, it must be granted, is to be allowed to Mrs. Pennibacker as a woman and a mother. A City Gentleman! What a vision! what exhalations rise from the ink that, like magic drops fallen from Circe's finger tips, create the radiant animal upon the white sheet before us! What a picture to the imagination, the—City Gentleman! Calm, plain, self-assured in the might of his wealth. All the bullion of the Bank of England makes back-ground details; the India-house dawns in the distance; and a hundred pennants from masts in India Docks tremble in the far-off sky.

Great odds these, against the simplicity of woman! The Bank, the India-house, and a hundred ships! Mrs. Pennibacker, had huge strength of character; but she succumbed to the unknown power of visionary wealth; to the mysterious attributes of the City Gentleman. No man could less look the part, yet Jericho bowed to the widow, a perfect enchanter.

Again, Jericho was charmed, elevated by the graciousness of the lady. Like an overlooked strawberry, he had remained until in his own modesty he began to think himself hardly worth the gathering. Therefore, when Mrs. Pennibacker vouchsafed to stoop to him, he was astonished at her condescension, and melted by his own gratitude. For Mrs. Pennibacker was a majestic woman. She had brought back nothing of the softness of the East. She was not—she never had been—an oriental toy for the grown child, man. It would have been hard to couple her with thoughts of love-birds, and antelopes, and gazelles. No; she rather took her place with those legendary Indian queens who hide their softness under golden bucklers; whose bows are strung with tiger-gut; and whose feminine arrows, though parrot-feathered, are fanged with mortal steel. In the picture of an ancient panther-hunt, you would have looked to see such a figure as the figure of Mrs. Pennibacker, thrusting a spear with a dread smile of self-approbation in the bowels of the objecting pard.

And then, Jericho himself had in this case imagination too: indeed, everybody has, when money is the thought, the theme. The common brain will bubble to a golden wand.

It was whispered, sharply whispered to Jericho, that the widow had many relations, many hopes in India. Immediately, Jericho flung about the lady all the treasures of the East. Immediately she stood in a shower-bath of diamonds; elephants' teeth lay heaped about her; and rice and cotton grounds, and fields of opium, many thousands of acres of the prodigal East, stretched out on all sides of her, and on all sides called her mistress. Yet for all this, Solomon Jericho was ordinarily a dull, matter of-fact man. Talk to him of Jacob's ladder, and he would ask the number of the steps.

All his life had Jericho trod upon firm earth; but widow Pennibacker whipped him off his leaden feet, and carried him away into the fairy ground of Mammon; and there his eyes twinkled at imaginary wealth, and his ears burned and stood erect at the sound of shaken shadowy money-bags.

And so, each trusting to each, Solomon Jericho and Sabilla Pennibacker wooed and won each other; and the winning over, each had to count the gains. It was very strange. Jericho himself could not bear to think of the folly, the crime of the omission. Such neglect had never before betrayed him. Why had he not assured himself of the woman's property, ere he made the woman his own? And then, for his cold comfort, he would remember that he had, on two or three occasions, touched a little gravely upon the subject, whereupon Mrs. Pennibacker so opened her large, black, mysterious orbs, that his soul, like a mouse when startled by Grimalkin's eyes — ran back into its hole. Again and again—it was a wretched satisfaction for the married man to think it—the question had been upon his tongue; when some smile of haughty loveliness would curve the widow's lips and —how well he recollected the emotion—he felt himself the meanest wretch to doubt her.

Mrs. Pennibacker had, on her part, just played about the property of Jericho; but, with the trustingness of her sex, she was more than satisfied when Jericho, with all the simplicity of real worth, spoke calmly, yet withal hopefully, of the vast increase of profit arising from his platina mines. The word "platina" sent Mrs. Pennibacker to her Encyclopædia, which however, comforted her exceedingly. She had instinctively known it all along; but she now felt assured! Solomon Jericho, the holder of mines, possessed wealth inexhaustible.

Being a City Gentleman, of course he sold his platina on the Stock Exchange.

The wedding was very gorgeous. Very rarely are two people joined together with so much expense. Nevertheless the contribution of either party — had the other known it — would have somewhat shaken Hymen ; if, indeed, it had not wholly frightened him out of the church. Mrs. Pennibacker, when introduced to Jericho, was so deep in debt, that often, let folks try as they would, they could not see her. And Jericho—doubtless from a short supply of platina—was an object of extreme solicitude to a large number of dealers. When, however, it was understood that the widow was to be married to a rich man in the City, the lady found the very handsomest outfit for herself and children made delightfully easy. And Jericho, bearing in mind the heavy expense of an intoxicating honeymoon, readily obtained the means, when *his* circle — and every man has a circle, though of the smallest — rang with the news that he was in imminent likelihood of marrying the widow of an Indian nabob !

And so bridegroom and bride — with a mutual trust even beyond mutual expectation—walked to the altar, there to be welded into one. They were married at St. George's Church,—married in the bosom of a few surrounding friends. The bride's children were present, and cast a mixed interest of pensiveness and pleasure on the ceremony. The bride had told her bridesmaid that, "It would cost her a struggle, but the dear children should be present ; it was right they should. They ought to have the sacrifice impressed upon their minds in the most solemn way ; the sacrifice that their poor mother consented to make for them. Nobody but herself knew what a struggle it was ; but, it was her duty, and though her heart was with dear Pennibacker,—yes, she would go through with it. Mr. Jericho had given the dear girls the most beautiful lace frocks ; and to Basil a lovely gold hunting-watch ; therefore, they ought and they should, witness the sacrifice."

And Miss Pennibacker and Miss Agatha Pennibacker, like little fairies, clothed in muslin and lace from elfin-looms, saw the sacrifice with a vivacity of heart that almost spirted out at the corners of their lips ; and Basil Pennibacker, a gaunt, reedy boy of twelve, did nothing during the ceremony but take out his new gold hunting-watch—open it—snap it to—and return it again, as though he had already had a glimpse of the preparations for the wedding-breakfast, and with his thoughts upon all the delicacies of the season, was impatient for the sacrifice to be completed.

And the last "amen"—the last blow on the rivet—was struck, and Solomon Jericho and Sabilla Pennibacker were man and wife. Whereupon, in a hysteric moment, the bride turning to her children, took the three in one living bunch in her arms, and sweeping them over to Jericho, said—"You are their father now."

Turning to the church books of St. George's we find that the date of this interesting deed of gift makes it about eight years to the date of the particular emphatic question with which Mrs. Jericho, as with a flourish of a silver trumpet, opened this little history.

CHAPTER II.

It was what we will venture to call a vinous hour of the morning, when Mr. Jericho returned home after the dinner eaten abroad in defiance of his own household gods, we fear sadly despised upon the occasion. For Mr. Jericho, with accessory boon-fellows, had partaken of a luxurious repast; little caring that his own stinted lares were served with, at best, metaphoric cold mutton. Mr. Jericho had tested the best resources of the larder and cellar of the Apollo Tavern; and full of meat and wine, and his brain singing with fantastic humours, he had surveyed the river Thames with simpering complacency; had seen big-bellied ships, stowed with India and Africa, drop silently with the tide towards their haven. It was impossible to enjoy a serener evening or a nobler sight. The setting sun, with a magnificence quite worthy of the west-end, coloured all things gold and ruby; the black hulls of ships glowed darkly and richly; and their sails were, for the time, from Tyrian looms. The gorgeousness of the hour enriched every common object with glorious beauty. Every cold, mean common-place of the common day seemed suffused in one wide harmonious splendour. And the brain of Jericho, meditating the scene, was expanded and melted into it; and in that prodigal wealth of colour, the illusion a little assisted by the swallowed colours within him, Jericho felt himself a part and parcel of the absorbing richness. The wine in his heart, a Bacchus' jack-o'-lantern, reflected the rosy, golden light that came upon him.

This sweet illusion lasted its pleasant time, fading a little when the bill was rung for. Nevertheless, Jericho, by the force of the scene and the wine, felt himself in much easier circumstances than the hard tyranny of truth, when he was in a calm condition to respect its dictum, was likely to allow. And so, at that hour when sparrows look down reproachfully from their eaves at the flushed man trying the street-door—at that penitential hour, with the hues of the past romantic evening becoming very cold within him — Mr. Jericho stood beneath his own oppressive roof.

Mrs. Jericho was gone to bed.

Mr. Jericho breathed a little lighter. Such a load was taken off him, that he mounted the staircase tenderly, as though he trod upon flowers : as though every woollen blossom in the carpet from the stair to the bed itself was living heart's-ease ; which it was not.

Being somewhat ashamed of Mr. Jericho who, as it has been shown, left his wife to the solitude of her dinner-table, whilst he, luxurious spendthrift, could dine with company abroad,—we should be very happy if we could, without any more ado, put him to bed at once, and indignantly tucking him up, and with perhaps an allowed allusion to the sort of head that awaited him in the morning, let the good-for-nothing fellow snore till the curtain-rings danced again, allowing him only to wake up in time for the next chapter. But this we cannot do. The stern, iron moral it is our wish to impress upon the world — yielding as it always is to such impressions — compels us to steady Mr. Jericho to his bed-side ; and even when there, not for awhile to leave him.

In the reproachful quietude of his dressing-room, Jericho prepared himself for his couch. Tenderly did his fingers dwell upon and wander about buttons. He caught a sight of himself in the looking-glass, and to dodge his conscience — set himself to feign to whistle : and then it struck him it must be very very late, his beard had grown so much. And the day in a moment seemed to have opened its broad, staring eye ; and the sparrows cried more saucily ; and the reproachful voice of the pigeons perched upon the chimney-top, came down in muffled murmur upon Solomon's ear ; and with a very little more he would have felt himself a villain.

The culprit placed his hand upon the handle of the bed-room door. Had he been a burglar with a felonious intention upon Mrs. Jericho's repeater, instead of the man responsible for the rent and taxes of the house in which he at that moment stood in his shirt and shuddered,—had he, we say, at that point of time been an unlawful thief *in posse*, in lieu of a lawful husband *in esse*, his knees—unless he had been a very young and sensitive rogue indeed—could not have so knocked together. With his face crumpled into a thousand lines, he opened the door. What a blessing; the hinges did not that time creek, and before they always did! Assured by the omen, Jericho took a little bit of heart. The night-light was winking its last. There was not a sound. The bed-curtains hung like curtained marble. Jericho paused, turning up his ear. Still not a sound. Sabilla did not ordinarily sleep so light. The stillness was peculiar—curious—very odd.

"And if my Lucy should be dead!"

At the moment Solomon Jericho, though he did not know it, was quite as much the author of that line as William Wordsworth. Still silent? Hush! A gnat drones its tiny trump between the curtains. *Ubi flos, ibi apis.* Suddenly Jericho is assured; and with two long, soft strides, is at his own side of the bed. Sabilla is evidently in a sound, deep, sweet sleep. Untucking the bed, and making himself the thinnest slice of a man, Jericho slides between the sheets. And there he lies, feloniously still; and he thinks to himself—being asleep, she cannot tell how late I came to bed. At all events, it is open to a dispute; and that is something.

"Mr. Jericho, when can you let me have some money?"

With open eyes, and clearly ringing every word upon the morning air, did Mrs. Jericho repeat this primal question.

And what said Jericho? With a sudden qualm at the heart, and with thick, stammering tongue, he answered—"Why, my dear, I thought you were sound asleep."

"I should be very happy if, like some people, I could sleep, Mr. Jericho. I should be very glad indeed if, like some people, I could leave the house and take my pleasure, and run into every sort of extravagance. But no! I must remain at home. But I tell you this, Mr. Jericho, I have made my mind up. Lying here, and being bitten by the gnats as I have been"—

"I'm sure, I'm very—very sorry"—

"Not you, indeed. No—no. You don't care how I'm bitten; or, for that matter, who bites me. But that is not what I was going to say. What I was going to observe is this—Neither you nor any man in this world shall make a cat's-paw of me."

"I never thought of it. Never entered my head," said Jericho, screwing his skull into the pillow.

"Nothing but a cat's-paw, and I'm not come to that. I was deceived at the altar," said Mrs. Jericho: "grossly, shamefully played upon; and I have been deceived ever since."

"For the matter of that," cried Jericho, a little doggedly, "I was deceived too. Of course, everybody said you'd money; and so I was deceived—grossly deceived," cried Jericho, melting a little with a sense of his injury. "I don't want to return to the subject, Mrs. Jericho. But of course I thought you rich."

"Mercenary wretch! If the girls were only stirring, I'd get up," was the threat. "I'm sure it's time."

"Just as you like, Mrs. Jericho: only be good enough to let me go to sleep. Bed," said Jericho, making himself vigorously up for rest, "bed isn't the place to talk in."

"I don't wish to talk," replied Mrs. Jericho, "I don't wish to exchange a word with such a creature as you are. All I want to know is this—When can you let me have some money?"

"Money!" gasped Jericho.

"Money!" repeated Mrs. Jericho, with inexorable resolution.

"Mrs. Jericho," said the husband, bolting himself upright in bed, and looking aside, down upon the face of his unmoved wife—"will you permit me to sleep, now I've come to my own bed? I think it particularly hard when a man has been out all the day as I have been, toiling for his wife and family—I say I think it particularly hard"—

"I don't want to prevent your sleeping, Mr. Jericho. Sleep as long as the sleeping beauty, and I'm sure I should be the last person to attempt to wake you. All I want to ask of you is what I asked this morning. Nothing more. When shall I have some money?"

"Zounds, woman!"—cried Jericho.

"Don't call me woman—man!" exclaimed Mrs. Jericho. "Major Pennibacker"—

"He was only a captain," hiccupped Jericho.

"Major Pennibacker," reiterated his widow, "a soldier and a gentleman, never called me woman yet. Glorious creature! His sword would rattle in its scabbard if he knew how I was treated."

"Is this the time," cried Jericho, a little fiercely, "the time to talk of swords and scabbards, with the sun shining in at the windows? Why can't you let me go to sleep, and talk at the proper hours? After a man has been toiling and slaving for his wife and family"—

"No doubt. And I wonder how many wives—and how many families—that's it!" cried Mrs. Jericho, with a strange, cutting significance, that instantly levelled her husband; for Solomon desperately stretched himself in the bed; and lugging the nightcap over his ears, turned round, determined upon plucking up sleep, like poppies, by the roots.

"I'm not to be deceived by your indignation, Mr. Jericho. I know everything, or else where could your money go to?

However, as I said, I will no longer be made a cat's-paw of. For eight years have I been married to you, under what I may call false pretences. People called you the Golden Jericho, or is it likely that I could have forgotten the heroic man who—I feel it—has a slight put upon him in his warrior's grave, by your being in the nightcap you wear at this moment? However, he forgives me. At least, I trust"—and Mrs. Jericho spoke with a spasm—"I trust he does. It was all for the sake of his precious orphans that I am in the bed I am. Yes, Pennibacker"—and his widow cast up her eyes, as though addressing her first husband, looking down benignly upon her from the tester—"Yes, dear Pennibacker, you know for what I sacrificed the best of wives, and the most disconsolate of widows. I could have wished, like the Hindoo, to be burnt upon the pyre; I was equal to it; I could have rejoiced in it. But I re-married, unwillingly re-married, to sacrifice myself for our children. Yes, Pennibacker"—

"Damn Pennibacker!" cried Jericho.

"Mr. Jericho," said Pennibacker's widow, with her deepest voice, and with thunder brooding at her brows—"Mr. Jericho, will you dare to desecrate the ashes of the dead? Demon! Will you?"

"Well then," said Jericho, a little appalled—for an impartial circle had called Mrs. Jericho the Siddons of private life, she could so freeze her friends with her fine manner—"Well then, let me go to sleep. It's very hard, Mrs. Jericho; very hard, that you will always be throwing your husband's ashes in my face."

"No levity, sir; no levity," said Mrs. Jericho, very ponderously. "Though unhappily I am your wife, I cannot forget that I am Major Pennibacker's widow." And then Mrs. Jericho drew a sepulchral sigh; and then she hopefully added—"but he forgives me. However, as I believe I have observed once before, Mr Jericho, I will no longer be made a cat's-paw of."

"Of course not. Why should you?" said Jericho. "I'm sure, for my part, I want a wife with as little of the cat as possible." And then Jericho shrank in the bed, as though he had ventured too much.

Possibly Mrs. Jericho was too imperious to note the coarse affront; for she merely repeated—"Very well, Mr. Jericho: all I want to know is this—I ask to know no more. When—when will you let me have some money?"

As though the bed had been strown with powdered pumice, Jericho shifted and writhed.

"I don't wish to annoy you, Mr. Jericho," said the woman, with dread composure. "But you compel me, gracious knows, much against my nature, to ask when—when will you let me have some money?"

Jericho shook and groaned.

"It is much more afflicting to my nature, much greater suffering to me to ask, than it can be for you to hear. Major Pennibacker never had a pocket to himself. He, dear fellow, always came to me. Ha! how few men can appreciate the true dignity of married life. As I always used to say, one heart and one pocket. However, as it's quite time for me to get up; and as I suppose you intend to go to sleep—and as people will be here, and I must give them an answer of some sort,—permit me, Mr. Jericho, to ask you—I'm sure it's painful enough to my feelings, and I feel degraded by the question—nevertheless, I must and will ask you,—when will you let me have some money?"

Jericho—as though a dagger had been suddenly struck up through the bed—bounced bolt upright. There was a supernatural horror in his look: even his own wife, familiar as she was with his violence, almost squealed. However, silently eyeing him through the small murderous loop-holes of her lace border, Mrs. Jericho saw her pale-faced husband snatch off his cap, holding it away at arm's length; then, breathing hard and casting back his head, he cried in tones so deep and so unnaturally grating, that the poor woman, like a night-flower, shrank within herself at the first sound,—

"I wish to Heaven I was made of money!"

Mrs. Jericho, considerably relieved that it was no worse, added in a low, deep, earnest voice—"I wish to Heaven you were."

Foolish and wicked wishes do not fly upwards, but there is no doubt of it, descend below; where, though they are but bodiless syllables, they are often fashioned by the imps into pins and needles, and straightway returned to the world to torment their begetter.

And Solomon Jericho, with a silly, sinful wish at his heart—a wish further emphasised by the thoughtless amen of his wife—subsided into muddled sleep; snoring heavily, contemptuously, at the loneliness of his spouse. She, poor woman, lay awhile, silently struggling with her indignation. At length, however, her feelings growing too strong for her, she rose the better to wrestle with them.

And Jericho was left alone—alone in bed? Not alone. He had desperately fitted his night-cap to his head, and resolute upon sleep, had punched his head deep, deep into his pillow. Mrs. Jericho would have doubted her eyes had she seen the creatures in her house; but standing upon a ridge of her husband's night-cap, and looking wisely down upon her husband's dreaming face, were two fleas. An elder and a younger flea.

Their ancestors had come from the far East, and carried the best royal blood within them. It would be no difficult matter to trace them up to the court of king Crœsus, whither they were first brought in the cloak of Esop. Let it suffice, that from this Lydian stock descended the two fleas, at the time of our story, perched—like ruminating goats upon a ledge of rock—upon the night-cap of Jericho. Their progenitors had not come in, like many others, with the Conquest; but were brought to England in the train of a Persian Ambassador. After a wandering life, the race remained for some forty years comfortably settled in a lodging-house at Margate, bringing up a multitudinous family. From this stock came our two fleas, travelling, cosily enough, to London. How from the Apollo Tavern, where they first put up on their arrival in the metropolis, they made their way to the home of Jericho, passes our knowledge to declare. Very sure we are, that Mrs. Jericho believed she had no such creatures in *her* house.

Well, the two fleas having jumped upon the brow of Jericho, we shall, without any scruple, make use of them. They stand above the brain of the sleeper, and—being descended from the fleas of Esop—shall, for the nonce, be made to narrate to the reader the vision of the dreaming victim.

"Miserable race!"—said the father flea, with its beautiful bright eye shining pitifully upon Jericho—"Miserable, craving race! You hear, my son; man, in his greed, never knows when he has wherewithal. He gorges to gluttony, he drinks to drunkenness; and you heard this wretched fool, who prayed to heaven, to turn him—heart, brain, and all—into a lump of money. Happily, it is otherwise with fleas. We take our wholesome, our sufficient draught, and there an end. With a mountain of enjoyment under our feet, we limit ourselves to that golden quantity—enough."

"Therefore, O my sire, let us not, for our temperance, be gluttonous of self-praise. Seeing that fleas are the crowning work of the world; seeing that as sheep, and bullocks, and fish, and fowl are made for man, and man for us; let us be charitable towards our labouring servant,—poor biped! our cook and butler."

"My son, true it is, man feeds for us, drinks for us. Man is the labouring chemist for the fleas; for them he turns the richest meats and spiciest drinks to flea wine. Nevertheless, and I say it with much pain, man is not what he was. He adulterates our tipple most wickedly."

"I felt it with the last lodgers," said the younger flea. "They drank vile spirits: their blood was turpentine, with, I fear me, a dash of vitriol. How they lived at all, I know not. I always had the headache in the morning. Here, however"—and the juvenile looked steadfastly down upon the plain of flesh, the wide champaign beneath him,—"here, we have promise of better fare."

"The soil is woundily hot; hard, and dry, and hot as a volcano; and—mercy me!" cried the elder, "how it throbs and heaves. Hark!"—and the flea inclined its right ear—"the fellow's brain sings like a kettle. Now is he going off into a galloping dream. Our ancestors—some of whom, my son, as I have often told you, lived the bosom friends of conjurors and soothsayers—were, as many of their descendants are at the present day, to be met with amongst fortune-tellers and gypsies—our ancestors had the gift of following a dream in all its zig-zag mistiness. And the wisdom of our ancestors"—and here the flea raised itself upon its legs, and looked with a serene pride about it—"the wisdom of our ancestors has come down in its fullness upon myself; to be left, my dear child, whole and unimpaired, and I may add, unimproved to you."

"What a sight is this!" cried the young flea, staring at Jericho's face. "What an earthquake must be tumbling and rumbling in the fellow's heart; and how his teeth clang together! Is that thunder? No. But did you ever hear such snoring?"

"In a minute, my son, and he'll be in the thick of it. Attend; and I'll follow him through the maze, showing you all the odd things that shower up and down in his brain, just as the golden air-bubbles of yesterday sparkled in his wine-glass. But first, my child, let us drink." Saying this, the elder flea, raising itself pretty well upright, and with its strong claws taking a firm hold of the flesh beneath, for better purchase, struck its lance home, and opening its shoulders, drew up with its sucker such a hearty draught of drink, that Jericho, the unconscious cup-bearer, gave a sudden twist, so deep and hearty was the pull of the drinker. "Very good; very good, indeed," said the flea. "There's a fine delicate bouquet in it."

"Hm!" cried the younger flea; "for my part, I think 'twould bear a little more body. But, my sire, as I've heard you say, there's no judging truly from the first cup. Here goes again. Why, how the fellow kicks!"

"Such, my son," said the elder flea, "is man; such his waste-fulness upon himself, such his injustice to what—cocking his nose towards the stars—he calls the lower animals. At least, two bottles of wine, a gill or more of brandy, to say nothing of a draught or two of malt, are burning in his arteries, and in hot mist rising to his brain. Now, what work, what watching, what risk of limb and life—what multiplication of toil—to produce the various beverage he has guzzled! What digging and ploughing of the land; what vine-dressing; what sailing upon the stormy seas; what glass-blowing; what bottling, before the liquor, like a melted jewel, shone in his eye, and trickled down his throat! Yet here he lies, and with no conscious labour of his own, is at once the wine-press and distiller for the fleas. And when we seek to take our temperate draught—smallest drops; merest seed-rubies,—how the miser kicks and flounders! and when he has sense enough, what wicked words at times he pitches at us! But such"—said the elder flea, preparing itself for another stoup—"such is man." And again the flea pierced the wine-skin, and sucked up another draught, and again Jericho plunged, and twisted.

"The bin improves," said the younger flea, drinking very hard. "And yet, I'm sure there's burgundy in it. Now, never but twice before have I tasted burgundy; and then I suffered for it; just as if the grapes were grown on a soil of sulphur. Nevertheless, 'tis a rare cellar this, after the turpentine and vitriol of our last lodgings; so, hang the headache, and let's have t'other bumper."

"Not another drop," cried the elder flea. "Let the poor wretch beneath us teach us moderation. Consider his face. How dead and stupified it looks! How it shone above the table last night; and what a piece of dirty dough it looks at this moment! What light was in the lamp, and now what dulness and smoke!"

"And yet," said the younger flea, "the dough begins again to work. Surely, he's on with his dream now."

"Now, he's fairly off. A while ago, and the brain was only fluttering—like a bird trying its wings—but now—yes, now it's off. Ha! ha! A very droll dream, even so far as it goes;" and the old flea looked very wise.

"Tell it, father; tell it. You never told me a dream before: surely," said the young one, "I'm old enough to learn now."

"Listen, my son, and be instructed. The sleeping man is at this moment following his heart. The thing has been plucked out of his bosom by a laughing little creature, with painted wings: a strange creature, half-elfin half-angel. The elf, or angel, or whatever it is, hugs the heart in its plump arms, and its eyes twinkle with mischief, and its cheeks are pitted with dimples, and its lips pout as over-full of the fun that will rise to them ; and still away the child carries the heart."

"And the man ? Where 's the man that owns it ? Still following ?" asked the young flea.

"Still following, and in a pretty pucker about his property. But, my son, be silent ; and do not interrupt me. The elf, still flying with the heart, is now in the open country. A peaceful quiet spot. Beautiful meadows, starred with daisies. Ha ! they remind me of a scene of early youth. That green velvet quilt, sprinkled with little silver flowers—the quilt of the sweet Princess of Satinskin—that sweet, beautiful quilt in the palace of"—

"Never mind the palace," said the young flea. "You are now in the open country ; keep to the meadow."

And the elder flea, rebuked, proceeded. "There's cattle and sheep in the meadows ; and the boy, in sport, flies and flutters above them. And now he jumps from lamb's back to lamb's back, and the man still following, with all his eyes watching his heart, that the little elf in the wildest fun tosses up like a ball in the air, catching it again, and again tossing it up, and"—

"I should guess something odd," said the young flea ; "for how the fellow here kicks ! and how his face is broken into moving hills and valleys ! How he moans, too, about his heart. Poor devil !"

"And now, the little imp trips across a bridge, that leads to a large wooden building—still in the open country. He runs into the building, the fellow following him, as though now he was sure of getting his heart back again. Not a bit. The youngster throws the heart to a strange-looking woman ; a sort of Egyptian fortune-teller, and she, with a sharp glittering knife, begins to cut the heart into little pieces."

"Oh, ho ! Look at his face," cried the young flea. "And if he doesn't shift and twist like a worm on a hook !"

"The woman cuts the heart into small pieces, and the owner of the heart—how his knees twitch up and down, and how his head rolls upon the pillow at every touch of the knife !—at length sits down in a sort of curious despair to see what will become of his heart. And now, he looks about him : yes, he knows he is in a paper-mill ; and strangely enough appears to him a kind of living history of the rise and progress of paper. He sees the flags of Egypt growing in a ditchy nook—and red Egyptians pulling and peeling it. And here flourishes a field of bamboo, and here a Chinaman, with his side-long, almond eyes, cuts and shreds the skin from the bark. And the dreamer, seeing his heart in bits tossed into a trough, is suddenly smitten with the sense that his heart, the great machine and blood-pump of his life, is to be made into paper. He tries to protest against the injury. He tries to roar out; but not a word will come. He sits straining and gasping, and dumb withal, as a caught fish. And now he sees the bits of his heart curiously sorted by these hags of women; gloomy and wild as sybils; for, my son, I know what sort of folk sybils are from the wisdom of my ancestors, our great forefathers having been closely entertained by them."

"Go on, father: I'm impatient to know what they make of the heart," cried the younger flea.

"The women, with sharp hooks, pick out the little knots and hard bits from the heart, and then souse the sorted stuff into boiling water: and then they cut the bits with a turning thing toothed with knives; cut it and shred it; and now what was a fine, firm, full-weight heart, labouring in and through life, in the bosom of this wretched tipsiness below us, is soft and liquid as a dish of batter. Nevertheless, bating a chalky paleness in the fellow's face, he seems to do as well without his heart as with it."

"But it can't last, father; it can't last. He must have something of a heart to live," said the young flea.

"Be patient a minute, and you shall learn. Now, one of the hags scoops the batter edgewise into a little frame and shakes it and—presto!—all is done: the heart of the dreamer is worked up into I know not how many sheets—but there seems a lumping lot—a lumping lot of the finest and whitest paper."

"Poor devil, I say again. He can't live with that; he can't go through life with a heart of paper."

"Don't interrupt me. Whilst you spoke, everything changed. At this moment, the imp that vanished when he threw the heart to the hags, now carries it in a square bundle upon his head; laughing and skipping along London streets; and the man without a heart still following his tormenter. My son, the imp and the man are now going up Ludgate-hill"—

"Do you know the place?" asked the younger flea.

"Perfectly well; many years ago—for what a vulgar error it is to think fleas short-lived—many years ago, I walked on a Lord Mayor's day."

"Walked!" cried the young flea.

"Walked; that is, was carried in the miniver fur of an alderman of the Fishmongers' Company; and upon my life, a very noble sight it was. Yes, my child, I think I ought to remember that show, for it was on that very day, in that very miniver, I first met your poor mother. Ha! that was a happy day—and we saw all the fun from the beginning to the end; for we contrived to get upon the alderman, and sitting close and keeping quiet—for that's an art fleas have to learn, if they would see, and not in the end be seen—sitting close in the nape of the alderman's neck, we were present at the banquet. I shall never forget the beautiful sight we had, when the alderman got upon his legs to make a speech. Well, we were carried home and put to bed with the alderman, and from that time"—

"Never mind the alderman," cried the pert young flea, "but get on from Ludgate-hill."

"While I've talked, the imp and the man have gone round St. Paul's, and are now crossing into Cheapside. Shall I ever forget how, when we came to Cheapside, the giants—well, I won't think of that now. The imp with the load of paper on his head runs by Bow-Church, and the dreamer here stretches after him. My son, both imp and man," said the flea solemnly, "both imp and man have now entered the Bank of England!"

"The Bank of England!" repeated the young flea, impressed by the sudden seriousness of its parent.

There was a short pause. The elder flea, a little dry in the mouth with so much talking, again inserted its piercer in the skin beneath it, and drew up another glass of flea-wine. And in this the son dutifully imitated the father.

"The imp," continued the elder flea, much refreshed by the draught, "the imp has entered the Bank printing-office. The man without the heart, the poor wretch wriggling and moaning under our feet, resignedly drops upon a stool. He sits wringing his hands for his lost heart; and now his veins tingle, for he hears the creaking of presses. Their motion seems, strangely enough, his motion. And now, the imp that had vanished, comes back again, bringing in his arms the poor man's heart."

"It can't be of any use to him, now," said the younger flea.

"Of the best use, my child, as he thinks it. The imp jumps upon the man's knee, and the heart—it has lost its red colour, and its flesh-like look, and as though all the blood had been discharged from it, is white as a rag, save that the veins show through it all black—yes, black as ink; the heart nicely fitted by the imp, beats again in its place inside the sleeper. You see! how he smiles—and how his whole body heaves with the chuckle—as he again feels the old acquaintance. And now he can't make too much of the imp; he throws his arms about him, and paws his little cheeks in drunken fondness. You hear! You hear, how the laugh gurgles in the fool's throat, and all because he's got his heart back again."

"And now, as the dream's over, father—what say you to another drink ?" asked the young flea.

"In a minute, for 'tisn't over yet. No. The place is changed, and the sleeper is carried to see what appears to him Gold's Grand Review in the Bank cellars."

"What do you mean by Gold's Review ?" demanded the junior.

"The imp and the dreamer are in the Bank Cellars. Here, my son, in mighty bars—in bars that can break even the backs of emperors—is gold. The imp takes a new sovereign piece from its bosom, and holds it above its head. Like a small golden sun, it illumines the place. Whereupon, all the bars of gold become pigmy shapes, and all in action. Here we have a whole army—all in gold—marching, wheeling, forming into lines and squares. Here we have little golden shipwrights hammering at golden craft : here, cooks of gold sweating at golden dainties ; here, in the cellar, all the works and labours, the commands and services of the world, are shown by the imp in action—drawn into life, for a brief space, from what was a moment before bars of inert metal. It is my son, as if all the world outside of the walls of the Bank, was imitated by the world's masters down in the Bank cellars. I can see the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen in little men of gold not bigger than an Alderman's thumb : and here they act in the metal itself what the metal makes acted in the flesh outside."

"And for what purpose ? I don't see the use of it," said the young flea.

"As a farewell show to our dreamer here. And he is mightily pleased with it, for he rubs his hands, and then rubs his heart as though he found all happiness there."

"And has he found it, think you ?" asked the youngster.

"Hm ! That will be seen," said the old one.

CHAPTER III.

It was mid-day when Mrs. Jericho next entered her bed-room. She came in, humming a little piece of a song. Whereupon, the culprit between the sheets took courage to observe—"I don't think I ever passed so wretched a night."

"Considering the night was over when you came home, Mr. Jericho, you of course are the best judge. How should I know anything about it?" Such was the home-thrust relentlessly given by Mrs. Jericho. She would not be mollified.

"I went, my dear,"—began Jericho.

The outraged wife would not be insulted. Suddenly twisting round, as though stung by the hypocritic tenderness, Mrs. Jericho desired the man to keep his fine words for people out of doors. Her eyes were at length opened; she had a long time—too long—been fondly blind; but at last she knew all; she was satisfied, and—she again repeated it—she would not be insulted.

Jericho was not to be diverted into a quarrel. Pacific man! He would struggle to keep the peace. Hence, in tones feloniously intended to soften and cajole, he returned to what he called the terrors of the past night.

"If I were to live a thousand years, my love"—

"Love!" exclaimed Mrs. Jericho, and this time she turned full upon the offender. For a minute, she stood withering him from between the bed-curtains. And Jericho, not wholly lost to shame, dragged his night-cap over his brow, and shrinking, rolled himself upon the other side. With his heavy eye upon the parrots and parroquets perched and flying upon the bed-room paper that adorned the wall—for Mrs. Jericho, as she told her bosom friends, would have that paper at any price; the birds, and the palms, and the savannahs, as she said, so reminding her of past happiness with Pennibacker,—Jericho manfully continued:

"Yes, a thousand years, I shouldn't forget last night."

"Very likely not," said Mrs. Jericho. "I've no doubt you deserve to remember it. I shouldn't wonder."

"You don't know, my dear Sabilla"—Mrs. Jericho trod the room anew, impatient of such daring familiarity,—"you don't know what I've suffered. Such an extraordinary dream! I feel it now. It has almost killed me with bile. But it's the usual case with me. An uncomfortable dream always does. Killed with bile."

(The wretched hypocrite! With such baited cunning, he angled in the depths of woman's tenderness for unmerited sympathy. But we trust the reader will feel a grim pleasure at his disappointment; he caught nothing.)

"The dream, my love, the dream has quite scorched me up. I'm a man—as I believe you'll give me credit for, dear Sabilla—a man with a mind above such things; otherwise, I should think something dreadful, very dreadful, was going to happen. Could you give me some soda-water?"

"I am very sure, Mr. Jericho, there is not a single drop of soda-water in the house."

Hereupon the sufferer ventured to make a suggestion.

"Couldn't you send for some?"

"Certainly not," replied Mrs. Jericho, with instant decision. "If I cannot reclaim you to propriety, at least let me have the satisfaction, for the sake of your children, Pennib—Mr. Jericho, for their sake, let me, if possible, hide from an inquisitive world the vices of their father. Let me, at least, have such barren consolation." Jericho was silent. In consequence thereof, Mrs. Jericho, with gushing fluency, continued—"I have no wish, sir, to busy the idle world with my private wrongs; none whatever."

"I don't see, my—my dear"—said Jericho, from under the clothes—"I don't see why you should."

"And yet you ask me to send the servants for soda-water at this time of day. But what do you care how the domestics talk!—how your conduct as a husband and a father is made the gossip of the neighbourhood! I can just fancy, at this hour, Edwin asking for soda-water; and how very cleverly you'd be brought upon the counter. Of course, servants will talk. No wages will stop 'em. And—no, Mr. Jericho, no"—and his wife spoke as though sternly re-assured in her purpose—"you may stab my heart if you will; but at least you shall not—that is, if I can help it—you shall not call about the vulgar and unfeeling world to gaze upon the bleeding wound." And Mrs. Jericho sat down.

"I wouldn't do such a thing, and you know I wouldn't, Sabilla, dear, you know I wouldn't." Mrs. Jericho made no spoken reply; but her foot, tapping the carpet, was eloquent of unbelief and wrong.

There was no answering this, therefore Jericho adroitly sought to turn the current of discourse. For several minutes he hunted for a thought, his wife's foot still accompanying him on the search. At last he deemed himself successful, and, with the vivacity of good fortune, said—

"Can I have a cup of tea?"

Mrs. Jericho rose like a sultana, and with a cold dignity, and in deep searching tones, that made Jericho wince in the sheets, said—"Of course, Mr. Jericho; you are master in your own house. Of course, you can have a cup of tea." And, with this assurance, Mrs. Jericho slowly swept from her profaned bedroom.

"Well, and what does the old felon say? The scaly old griffin! What's he got to answer for himself?"

A young gentleman close upon one of the privileges of legal manhood—the privilege of going to prison for his own debts—put this sudden question to Mrs. Jericho, on her instant return to the drawing-room from the interview described above.

"Come, what is it? Will he give me the money? In a word," asked the hurried youth, "will he go into the melting-pot like a man and a father?"

"My dear Basil, you mustn't ask me," replied Mrs. Jericho to her emphatic first-born.

"Oh, mustn't I, though?" cried Basil. "It's as little as I can do. Ha! you don't know the lot of people that's asking me. Bless you! they ask a hundred times to my once. Well, will old Jericho tip the loyalty? Did you give him my sentiment, mother, eh? Money—money's like the air you breathe; if you have it not, you die. Have you brought me the beggarly allowance? If I don't blush a hole in my cheek to take it! It's disgusting. A hundred a-year! Not enough to keep a blind man in dogs."

"My dear Basil, where do you imbibe such extraordinary parallels?" asked Mrs. Jericho; and, with her eyes feeding upon the knowing, impudent face of the young man, she affectionately adjusted his cravat. "What a careless child you are—I'm sure you don't take care of yourself."

"First make it worth my while, mother. Care! What's the use of buttoning an empty pocket? But about this worst half of yours; this supernumerary father of mine. Only wished I'd ha' guessed what he's turned out. Little as I was, I'd ha' forbid the banns—I would—if I'd jumped upon a three-legged stool to do it."

Mrs. Jericho drew a deep, deep sigh, and tenderly pressed the hero in her arms.

"Don't sigh, ma'am," said the youth, "don't sigh; for times are bad, and bobbin's getting dearer." Mrs. Jericho tapped the young gentleman on his cheek. "To business, as the sun said when he rose late—to business, my dear madam. What does that ruffian-in-law answer to my just proposal ?"

"Basil, really, my dear Basil, I cannot listen: whatever Mr. Jericho's faults may be, if I can endure them—if I can be silent—at least I may expect my children"—

"Not at all, my dear lady, not at all. Your children never said a word to the bargain. They only looked on while you were sold. They have all the freedom of English subjects, and may abuse your husband *ad libitum.* I do nothing rashly, dear madam; I've inquired into the law, and I know it. My allegiance, my dear lady, is due to my own buried father; and as I am told he was a gentleman"—

"Basil, don't—pray don't! You bring him up before me. Ha! Basil, your father *was* a man."

"No doubt of it, my dear lady; no doubt of it, my revered mother;" and the young gentleman, with really a touch of grace, bent his head, and raised his mother's hand to his lips. "Would shoot the fellow, my dear lady, who doubted it. Well, why did you hook-and-eye yourself to the individual up stairs? Why were you induced to drop upon the golden name of Pennibacker the tin extinguisher of Jericho? As Hamlet somewhere says, why did you leave that Primrose Hill of clover, to go to grass on Wormwood Scrubs?"

"I entreat you, Basil—I supplicate, my dearest boy, that you desist! You"—

"All right, my dear lady, all right, and got the receipt. What I meant to say was this. You sacrificed yourself for the good of your family?" And Basil Pennibacker, with wrinkled forehead, looked inquiringly about, gesticulating as though chewing his emotion. "Didn't you?"

"I did, Basil, I did; but don't grieve for that—I can be resigned; I *have* been resigned."

"Like a tame lamb," said Basil, bursting into metaphor, "like a tame lamb you wreathed your brow with orange flowers, and in the very handsomest manner gave yourself away. Can I forget it? Ought I to forget it? Ought my sisters to forget it? Never. You married our destroyer-in-law — pardon my feelings, my dear madam; as your dutiful son I must call him so: you married our cannibal-in-law, to make the fortunes of your innocent orphans? Did you not?"

"I did, Basil," said Mrs. Jericho, and she shuddered. "Your father knows I did."

"In which case, madam, as one of those orphans, it is my first duty to take care that your intentions are honourably carried out. Now, madam, can I see Mr. Jericho ?"

"My dear child," said Mrs. Jericho, "he is not yet up."

"And nearly one o'clock—what an insult"—and Basil pointed towards the sun — "what a marked insult to that respectable luminary. Never mind. We'll hold a little bed of justice in this matter. For I do assure you, my dear lady, I tremble for myself; I do indeed. I never was so disloyal in all my life;—never."

Let not Mr. Basil Pennibacker suffer in the opinion of the faithful subject. That young gentleman — it was his whim, his characteristic mode of speech — adopted the word disloyalty as his synonym of poverty.

"My good sir,"—we give in the way of illustration a speech of Basil's to an earnest tailor — "my good sir, you know I always desire to respect the constituted authorities. I always like to have their images about me. But, my good sir, I have not seen the face of the monarch, sir, no not on the smallest piece of silver, for a natural twelvemonth, sir. I never felt myself such a traitor, sir. Look here"—and Basil twitched out his empty purse—"look here; not a pennyweight of loyalty in it, sir. 'Pon my life, sir, I've quite forgotten the quarterings of my native land. I'm a quadruped, sir, and not a gentleman, if I know whether Britannia holds a trident or a dung-fork. I'm disgusted with life, sir; for I've no loyalty—not an ounce of loyalty."

Thus, Mrs. Jericho — familiar with the figurative style of her son — was in no way alarmed, when he declared he felt himself the greatest traitor on earth ; he had been so long lost to loyalty.

"I should be very sorry, my dear madam," he added, "for the credit of the family, very sorry to be left alone with the crown, a blue bag in my hand, and the door open. I tremble, madam, at the picture. For I know it, my dear madam — I feel it, my affectionate parent — you would not like to see the head of your only and erring son upon Tower Hill. I'm sure, my dear lady, you could not survive that moment. Therefore, to prevent serious consequences, when am I to have an advance of loyalty ?"

"My dear Basil, you are so impetuous. I have not yet had an opportunity"—

"Had an opportunity! Make one, my dear lady. But I see how it is; you shrink before the tyrant. The ruffian that you have ennobled by consenting to wear his name, refuses to make the advance. Did you tell him that with three years' allowance down, I'd throw off five per cent. for the ready loyalty ? And he refuses ! Why, my dear lady, it's next to embezzlement. Upon my life, I wish to treat the individual with respect; nevertheless, it does flash across my mind that it's nowhere written that a man may not thrash his own father-in-law."

"Basil, I will not hear this. I tell you, I will not. Whatever may be the faults of Mr. Jericho — and who should know them better than myself?—I cannot sanction such sentiments. At a proper season"—

"My dear maternal lady, money isn't like green peas, coming in with a season; the proper season for money's when money's wanted. A season with me, my dear madam, that lasts all the year round, I can assure you," and again Basil kissed the hand of his anxious parent.

"The truth is, Basil, I do believe that Mr. Jericho is very much pressed—very much. And you know he is indulgent to you; and so, you must not be hard upon him: indeed, my love, you must not. I am very much afraid,"—and Mrs. Jericho looked at the youth with new affection—"very much afraid that you're an extravagant child."

"'Pon my life, my dear madam, when I see what other young fellows do, I feel myself a mean man; sometimes despise myself. You don't know how I struggle to keep down the miser in me. I've a dreadful idea sometimes, of what my end will be."

"My dear Basil!" cried the mother, in tender alarm.

"Sometimes, dear lady, I look into the middle of next century, and see myself a wretched being. Long beard, nails like fish-hooks, one shirt a-year, and dinners of periwinkles. Unless I exert all my strength of mind, I shall go off in mildew—die a miser. 'He denied himself the common necessaries of life'—that's what I sometimes fear will be my history—'and thus, it is believed, hastened his wretched and untimely end.'"

"Basil! How can you!"

"That's my fate, I fear. 'On his room being searched, bank-notes to a large amount were found in an old tinder-box, and a hundred and fifty guineas of the time of George the Second, secreted in a German flute!' Sometimes, when I'm melancholy and disloyal, I think that's my fate; but I'll struggle against the feeling," said Basil with filial emphasis; "I will struggle, my dear lady."

Whereupon Mrs. Jericho, haply comforted by his moral heroism, assured her boy that she would not let Mr. Jericho rest until he gave a definitive answer to his son-in-law's moderate proposition.

"That is all I want to know, my dear lady. Whether I'm to stop short at sudden ruin, or to go on. I'm disgusted with life at present, but I'm open to any arrangement that shall make me change my opinion. Hallo! Aggy, why you're come out of a rainbow!"

This sudden salutation was addressed to Miss Agatha Pennibacker who, fine and gauze-like as a dragonfly, floated into the room, and settled upon a sofa. "I have told you twenty times," said the young lady with face severely set, "I will not be called Aggy. It's hideous."

"Then why don't you change it? I say, mother, when are you going to consign these girls to India? Market's full here. Bless you, such a glut of wedding-rings, I'm told they hang mackerel on 'em." And Basil laughed saucily at Agatha; and Agatha pouted contemptuously.

"My dear Basil, I thought I heard your voice. Where have you been, you naughty child? I'm sure your poor sisters"—it was Monica Pennibacker who spoke as she entered—"your poor sisters might as well be without a brother."

"That's their opinion Nic," and the youth was about to chuck Monica's chin, when Monica drew herself like a pouter pigeon above the familiarity.

"When you can address your elder sister as you ought, Basil"—

"Come, if you're going to act domestic tragedy I shall leave the house, and not take a check to come back," said Basil. "What's the matter with you both? Why, you're as stiff as if you slept in sheet iron and boarded on whalebone. What's the matter? Just wish you'd some of my troubles. Only yesterday, I lost Scrub my terrier; a love of a thing that would kill rats as fast as he could see 'em. Turn out a hundred rats, and in a twinkling he'd make 'em feel as if the eyes of Europe were on 'em. And that dog's dead. Yet look at me," and Basil passed his fingers through his hair, and with much fortitude, wiped an imaginary tear from his eye. "Scrub's departed, yet I consent to breathe."

"Scrub! Bringing terriers before ladies," said Monica; "do not be so vulgar."

"Indeed Basil," chirupped young Agatha, "you get so low your sisters must disown you."

"Poor little kittens," cried Basil, and he dropped astride a chair, and shook his head at the young ladies, and sighed.—"Well, 'pon my life, I do wish you were out of this world!"

"Basil!" exclaimed the sisters, with a slight hysteric scream.

"Basil!" said Mrs. Jericho, in deep reproving thunder.

"You're too good for this earth; you are, indeed, girls. Take it in the lump, and see what a lot of it's beneath your notice. What a little of it's really respectable. If it wasn't unmanly, I could weep to think that my superfine sisters lived in the same wicked vulgar world that makes black-puddings and sells cat's meat."

"My dear Basil," said Mrs. Jericho, in a tone of tender remonstrance, "do not be so extravagant. And you hurt your sisters; you do, indeed. A man"—and Mrs. Jericho took breath for a great utterance—"a man never so beautifully shows his own strength, as when he respects our softness."

"No, indeed;" said the young ladies, speaking and shaking their heads in sympathy. "No!"

"I've a whole bank of respect in me, ma'am"—and Basil spread his fingers over his breast — "but I don't pay a penn'orth of it to forged drafts. Now, softness is one thing; and—my dear parent I am quite prepared to prove what I say—and gammon is another."

"If you allude to me, sir,"—said Monica, who had evidently made up her mind for an apophthegm—"permit me once and for all to observe, that I don't know what you mean."

"That's exactly my feelings on the subject, Monica dear," cried Agatha.

"Now, children, I cannot endure this. It distresses me. These little quarrels lacerate me. You know, as I have often said, girls, I gave up everything for my children. Had I consulted my own feelings, I should have glided a solitary thing to—to your father. Therefore"—here Mrs. Jericho drew forth her pocket-handkerchief; and both the girls, with a precision quite military, imitated the movement—"therefore, kiss one another and be friends."

"With all my heart, and all my mouth," said Basil. "Come along, girls"—and he folded his arms—"come along; I won't bite."

"What a creature you are!" cried Monica, wiping her eyes, as her mother moved her towards Basil.

"I dare say," said the young Agatha, lifting herself upon her toes, to Basil, "I dare say, now, you don't kiss Bessy Carraways in that manner."

"Bessy Carraways," said Basil, and the blood ran all over his face, his mother silently smiling at the emotion—"Bessy Carraway is a—a—" Basil stammered, then laughed—"a flower."

"No doubt, dear Basil," said Monica. "So are all young ladies of Bessy's age; all flowers."

"But I mean," said Basil, "the natural thing. You see, my beloved sisters, there are two sorts of flowers. Now, Bessy isn't too fine, or too good for this world. No; she's a flesh and blood flower, growing upon the earth, and not thinking it too dirty for her; a flower that gives out the sweetness of her own natural self, and doesn't think it too good for other people: and why, because she thinks no more about it, than a rose or a lily, or any other blossom that's delicious and doesn't know it."

"Upon my word, Basil," cried Mrs. Jericho, with joyous emphasis, "you are quiet a poet."

"Should be very sorry, ma'am, for the respectability of the family," said Basil.

"Oh, quite a bard," exclaimed Monica, with a sarcasm so very fine, it was unfelt by its object. "Now, you have given us one sort of female flower, what—dear boy—what is the other?"

"Certainly, Nic," and Basil took his sister's hand between his own. "The other flower doesn't root in the world at all: earth's too vulgar for it, dearest maid. It's a flower so fine, it's grown out of silk or velvet, and stands upon a wire stalk. Whatever scent it has, it isn't its own: it doesn't come out of itself, sweet girl, but out of the fashion. Very fine flowers; very bright, and very sweet, and very wax-like,—but still, my darling virgin, they are flowers, sown in silk, cultivated by the scissors, and perched upon stiffness. Not at all the sort of flower for my button-hole, I can tell you."

"Dear no! Of course not," cried the wicked Agatha, clapping her hands. "Bessy is, of course, *your* heart's-ease."

"My dear little puss," said Basil, "I like Bessy, as I said, because she doesn't think herself too good for other people: for all that, I'm not good enough for her. No, my little tortoise-shell, I shall always study humility, it's safest—shall always think myself not good enough for any woman in the world. When I die, this is the epitaph I shall have grown over me:—'*He was so humble of spirit, he never lifted his thoughts to marriage. Reader, go and do likewise.*'"

"My dear, strange Basil!" said Mrs. Jericho, with an incredulous laugh.

"Shall endeavour to leave five pounds a-year, to have that epitaph grown over me in mustard and cress. Five pounds a-year, ma'am, to the sexton, to keep my memory green."

"I wonder what Miss Carraways would say if she heard you. But I know better," said Monica. "I think, Agatha, we had better bespeak our posts as bridesmaids."

"Wouldn't suffer it, my darling girls," said Basil. "If ever I was to marry—not that I ever shall; no, no—I shall walk through the world with the mustard and cress steadily in my eye—you shouldn't come near my wife. No, no; you're too good, too fine, too embroidered, for the plain work of matrimony.

Bless your little filagree hearts, before you marry you ought to perform quarantine in cotton, and serve seven years to pies and puddings."

"Now, my dear, dear Basil"—

But Edwin, entering with a letter, destroyed Mrs. Jericho's sentence in its early syllables.

"How curious!" cried Mrs. Jericho. "A letter from Mrs. Carraways. I know her dear hand from all my friends: there is such a flow of the lady about it. Ha! the party. '*Mr. and Mrs. Carraways request the honour of*—' yes; we are all invited. This is to be the great fête of the season. Jogtrot Lodge will be burningly brilliant. The richest people will be there, and I have heard," and Mrs. Jericho lowered her voice, "I have heard, some of the nobility."

"No doubt," said Basil; "just a lord or two, to keep 'em sweet."

"Really, Basil, you ought to go and live in a cave, upon wild elderberries; you ought," said Monica; and then she turned to her parent, with a look of touching helplessness. "But, my dear mamma; *how* are we to go?"

"Yes, mamma," said the forlorn Agatha, "*how* are we to go?"

Mrs. Jericho was looking about her for an answer, when Basil observed—"I see: got no gowns. Ask a woman to a tea-party in the Garden of Eden, and she'd be sure to draw up her eyelids, and scream—'I can't go without a gown.'"

"I think, Basil"—said Miss Monica, a little majestically,—"you had better confine yourself to terriers, and things that, perhaps, you understand. What do you know about gowns?"

"Very true, my eider-duck, very true. And, mother, as I am to show at the Lodge, I must really have a supply of loyalty: for I quite sympathise with the girls; feel it quite impossible, my honoured lady, to appear at the same table twice in the same toothpick."

Mrs. Jericho, tapping her palm with the missive from Jogtrot Lodge, was descending deep into meditation. Who shall say what visions rose before her? It had always been her ambition that her girls should—in her own nervous words—"make a blow in marriage." And she felt—felt as a mother—that, perhaps, the time was come. The girls should go armed at all points for conquest. "It shall be so," said Mrs. Jericho, self-communing; and then she serenely smiled upon all her children.

"Proud to take your word for it, my revered lady," said Basil. "So as I've got to look at another dog at Chambers,—though Scrub's a first-love I shall never get over; yes, that dog's a bruised place here, I can tell you,"—and the mourner pointed his fore-finger to his heart—"I'll be back in a couple of hours. I suppose, girls, you'll go to this fête, like the rest of 'em, in your war-paint ?" (The young ladies could not tell what he meant.) "Therefore, for the honour of the family, I must start a new toothpick. So, the loyalty I must have, my dear madam—the loyalty, my honoured parent, or in two hours I'm cutting my name with a shilling pen-knife in the Tower of London. Good morning," and Basil, with his best grace, saluted the hand of his mother, filliped a kiss to both the girls, and strode from the room.

"Well, he is a handsome fellow," said Monica.

"Handsome ! he's beautiful," cried Agatha.

"Beautiful !"—exclaimed the mother, sighing—"he's his own father, when I first met him. Yes ; every look, and every tone a Pennibacker."

"Mr. Jericho's in his room, ma'am," said Edwin the page.

"Oh !" said Mrs. Jericho.

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Jericho sat in his study ; and still his dream sat astride his spirit. Much of the first distinctness of the vision had faded in the morning light ; nevertheless, he could piece out sufficient from its mistiness to make him dull and dumpish. He was not a superstitious man—certainly not. He would despise himself to be troubled by a dream ; and then he shifted in his seat, and took up the newspaper, and laid it down again. And then he thought all dreams were to be read backwards : and thus, his vision of the Bank Cellars was to be mockingly realised by the Queen's Bench. And then he looked about him and took heart. Pooh ! dreams were playthings for conjurors and gypsies ; quite beneath the thought of a reasonable, a respectable man. He had often dreamt he had been hanged, and what had come of it ? Nothing ; good or bad. Mr. Jericho again took up the newspaper, and was endeavouring to interest himself in the affairs of his holiness the Pope, when the door opened. He winced, for he knew the feminine turn of the handle ; he winced, we say, but nevertheless manfully, with the paper before his eyes tried to keep his soul apart—far away at the Court of Rome. He heard the well-known rustling of the well-known skirts, and shivered just a little at the sound. Three or four of the softest footsteps told distinctly on the silence; and then—he knew it, though he saw it not—Mrs. Jericho in her morning muslin, subsided upon the opposite chair like a summer wave.

Mr. Jericho, almost without knowing it, had shifted himself to the Tyrol, and was trying to wonder at the next move of the Emperor of Austria, when Mrs. Jericho slightly coughed. Upon this, Jericho, a little agitated, found himself among the list of bankrupts; then he took flight to the House of Commons; where he became intensely absorbed by the Sugar Question, in which he would have been happy to be busied all the morning, when the wife of his bosom observed,—

"Mr. Jericho"—

"My dear, just now it is impossible," said Jericho, shifting.

"What is impossible, Mr. Jericho?" asked the lady, with cold wonder.

"Why, just now—I—I cannot let you have any money," said Jericho; and he wiped his brow.

"Did I ask for money, Mr. Jericho?" inquired the wife, wounded by the imputation.

"Eh! Why—hm! Didn't you?" cried Jericho, somewhat incredulous.

"Will you oblige me, Mr. Jericho, by looking at that?" and Mrs. Jericho handed in the Carraways' letter.

"Oh! Ha!" cried Jericho—"an invitation to their grand party. Very kind of 'em. People who ought to be cultivated. Considering the money they have, they don't hold their head quite high enough, to be sure; nevertheless, very good people; very rich people. We shall go, my dear, of course."

Mrs. Jericho folded her hands together, dropt them gently into her lap, then turned her very placid face full in the face of her husband, and slowly, and very anxiously put to him these words—"And *how* are we to go, Mr. Jericho?"

"How, my dear!" cried Jericho, in the darkest ignorance.—"How would you go?"

"As your family, Mr. Jericho; as your wife and daughters"—said the lady, "we ought to go drest."

"Why, yes, my dear"—said Jericho—"'twould look very particular, if you didn't. He! he!"

"I admire wit, true wit, Mr. Jericho," said the lady, with a pitying smile; "but no real gentleman ever descends to humour. Major Pennibacker never—but that is not the question. In a word, Mr. Jericho, your wife and daughters have no clothes to go in. Therefore, as you have decided to accept the invitation, may I ask when can you let me have some money?"

Jericho dropt the paper, pushed himself from the table, and groaned.

"Oh, very well, very well,"—said Mrs. Jericho, with cutting vivacity—"I can write a refusal: of course; we are ill, or are going out of town, or have a better engagement; anything will do."

"Now, my dear creature, will you be reasonable?" cried Jericho, intreatingly. "What *do* you want?"

Mrs. Jericho replied with admirable brevity. "Want! Everything."

"Impossible," said Jericho.

"If we cannot go like your wife and daughters, we had better—far better for your credit—stay at home. Well, I did not think it would come to this"—said Mrs. Jericho, a little affected—"I did not think when I consented to marry you, that you would suffer my dear girls to want the necessaries of life."

"Why, you don't call fine extravagant clothes the necessaries of life?" cried Jericho.

"Yes, I do, sir; for such a party as that of Carraways; and for girls that are marriageable. Why all the world—that is, the richest people in the world—will be at the fête. And are the poor things, the dear girls, to remain always at home—kept in the dark, like jewels in boxes—for nobody to see them? Why, Mr. Jericho, you're a king Herod to the dear children, and nothing better. Indeed to kill them outright, would be more merciful."

"My dear creature"—Mrs. Jericho snatched an angry look at the word—"my dear Sabilla, what would you have me do? I'm sure I don't want to keep the girls at home, I'm sure"—Jericho spoke with increasing earnestness—"I'm sure I should be delighted to see them married. Why, you must confess, my dear; you must own, my love, that it was only a fortnight ago, I gave you fifty pounds, for"—

"And what's fifty pounds among three women?" asked Mrs. Jericho.

Jericho, with early habits of arithmetic, quickly replied—"Sixteen pounds, thirteen and fourpence a piece."

"I have told you, Mr. Jericho, that I admire wit—but no low humour. As much wit as you please, sir, but no buffoonery. Very well"—and Mrs. Jericho rose—"I'll write and decline the engagement."

"You know best, my dear, of course. I'll leave it all to you;" and Jericho resumed the paper. A brief pause: and then he added—"I'm sure I only wish I was made of wealth; but I can't make money, you know; I wish I could. The expenses of this family"—

"No, no, Mr. Jericho; not of *this* family," and Mrs. Jericho hissed on the pronoun: "not *this*."

"My good woman," cried Jericho, falling back in his seat with a hopeless stare, "what *do* you mean?"

"You know very well what I mean; and—no, no, Mr. Jericho—I am not to be deceived by such hypocrisy. I have tried to smother the dark thought as it rose; I have struggled to crush the scorpion suspicion that preys upon my peace; I have wrestled with myself to hide my sorrow from the world, that my wound"—

"Wound!" cried Jericho, striking the table; "in heaven's name, woman, what wound?"

"That my wound might bleed inwardly"—continued the wife—"but it is impossible for me to consent to be quite a fool: no, indeed; you ask too much. Not quite a fool, Mr. Jericho."

Let us at once explain. Let us possess the reader with the dark thought that, fitfully, would shadow the clear day of Mrs. Jericho's life; let us at once produce upon the page the scorpion complained of.

Mrs. Jericho was so convinced that her household expenses were of such petty amount; was so assured that the family, in its various outlay, cost the head of the house next to nothing,—that when Mr. Jericho pleaded lack of means, the scorpion aforesaid, with the malice of its kind, would insinuate the cruellest, the falsest suspicion of the truth and constancy of the husband. Not, however, that Mrs. Jericho believed it: let us do her so much justice. Hence, when—to the first horror of Jericho—she hazarded an opinion that "there must be another wife and family out of doors, or where could the money go to?"—when to Jericho's contempt, astonishment, and wrath, his honoured wife implied so withering an accusation, the good woman herself had really no belief in the treason. It was the very waywardness of affection: it was love-in-idleness frolicking now with a thorn, and now a nettle. This, however, was in earlier days. As time wore on, Mrs. Jericho would press the thorn, would flourish the nettle, with greater force and purpose, and possibly for this reason; she had found the instruments of unexpected value. Jericho, to escape them, would make the required concession, would consent to the expense demanded. Briefly, Mrs. Jericho had only to call up the shadowy wife and family out-of-doors, to compel Jericho to concede to any request for the living spouse and children beneath his roof. So useful, so valuable were these shadows found by Mrs. Jericho, that it is not to be wondered at that the good woman, without even confessing it to herself should, as time wore on, believe them to be something more than shades; and yet not real things; on the other hand, not altogether ideal mist. Having explained this much, the reader will take the taunts of Mrs. Jericho at their real worth; will value them as so much thistle-down that, blown about by idle air, nevertheless contains in its floating lightness the seed of thistles.

Mrs. Jericho remained the undisputed possessor of the last word. With a despairing twitch, Jericho had again seized the newspaper. "Well, then"—said the wife—"it is no use my wasting my time; I will write to the Carraways that we shan't come."

"You will do just as you please, I am sure, my dear. You always do," said Jericho.

"Not I indeed; oh dear no. But, I dare say, your wife out of doors does as she likes; I have no doubt of that. I am sure again and again have I wished I had been a Hindoo wife; then I had sacrificed myself upon the pyre and been happy—but I am rightly served." Jericho, resolutely, held fast by the newspaper, determining to forego his allowed share of the conversation in favour of his wife: she should have all the talk; he would not deprive her of a single syllable. "And Mr. Jericho, you have decided? We are not to go to Jogtrot Lodge? We are to miss — what I consider, thinking of my poor dear girls — miss one of the greatest opportunities of the season? And this because you spend out of doors what should go to your own family! I dare say, if I could only see—and I will, if I live, that I am determined upon—if I could only see how other people are drest; if I could only know the jewellery that's lavished upon them; if I could only know what they cost, it would be pretty plain why we are debarred the common decencies of life. Once, I was foolish, weak enough to believe that your wife and family — I mean the wife and family under this roof — had all your money, and all your thoughts; but I have lived to find the bitter contrary." Still Jericho held manfully by the newspaper; and with his blood burning and bubbling in his ears, would not make reply—not one word. "And you are resolved that the dear girls shall not go? You have made your mind up to blight their future prospects? You are determined to keep us all here like nuns, that other people—I said other people, Mr. Jericho—should run riot in what lawfully belongs to your own family? And your excuse is — you havn't the means! But I know better."

And here Jericho, with a wan look, laid down the newspaper; then ventured to glance appealingly in the face of Mrs. Jericho, and sighed.

Mrs. Jericho was not to be moved. She was there to fulfil a great purpose. She had, or thought she had, some solemn warning in her breast that the approaching festival at Jogtrot Lodge portended greatness to one, haply to both her daughters: and the children should make a seemly preparation for their destiny. They should be drest and adorned for the best luck that could befal them. With whatever state it might please fortune to smile upon them, they should be worthy of her most affectionate notice. This determination every moment grew stronger in the heart of the mother, who dropt her cold regards upon the newspaper, and then slowly raised it in her hand. A cruel, cutting smile of irony sharpened her lips. "Oh yes," she said, "I see what has engaged you in this paper. It's very plain."

"What's plain?" asked Jericho.

"Oh, the advertisement here. 'Pon my word, I think the press of the country has come to something, when it brings morning vipers into the bosom of a family."

"Morning vipers! What is the woman after?"

"The liberty of the press! The libertinism, Mr. Jericho, that's the word. Now, do you suppose that I can be so darkened not to see that this advertisement is addressed to you?" and Mrs. Jericho pointed her finger like a dagger to the top of a column.

"Is the woman mad?" asked Jericho.

"No, sir; and it's the wonder of all my friends—all who know your conduct—that I am not. For this—this is enough to make me mad," and Mrs Jericho read from the top column these mysterious words:—

BARBARA * * * * * is anxious to hear from J. The last Bank-note was received. Darling S. is quite well; but prattles continually about J.

"And seated before me you can read this! Why, of course, that's where your money goes," and Mrs. Jericho, to be prepared, twitched forth her pocket-handkerchief.

Jericho groaned and shook his head; silent, helpless, hopeless.

The wife interpreted everything with astonishing readiness. "Of course," she said, as though pleased with the discovery, "Barbara writes to J. And who can J. be, but Jericho? And their darling S. who prattles so, is Solomon;—of course, there can be no doubt of it. Mrs. Barbara *Stars* and your own 'Solomon.' It's now all clear; and now I'm sure of it; now I know where your money goes."

It was very strange. At this moment a smile suddenly broke over Jericho's face, and he looked straight at his wife. Mrs. Jericho quickly drew up at the pleasant aspect of her lord.

There was something so queer, so odd in the man. Quite a new look of satisfaction gleamed from his eyes, and his mouth had such a smile of compliance! What could ail him!

"Jericho," cried the wife, suddenly familiar.

"My dear—my love," answered Jericho, the words dropping melted from his heart.

"What—why—that is—I mean, what do you smile at? What makes you look so very, very odd?"

"Really, my love," said Jericho, with deepening tenderness, "I can't tell; but upon my word I don't know how it is. I should think there was a great lump of luck going to fall upon us. I somehow, I—never felt in such a pleasant humour in all my days. Upon my life, it *is* strange! But everything about me seems to have a new glow—a strange look of freshness in it. As true as I'm alive, Sabilla, you don't look above five-and-twenty. Never saw you look so young in all my life."

"There's nothing so very—so particularly strange in that, Mr. Jericho. But what is the matter with you? Anything in the paper that"—

"Not at all; nothing—not a word. Ha! ha! well it is very odd; but I somehow feel as if I could take everybody in the world—that is, every respectable person, of course—take 'em all in my arms and embrace 'em."

"I trust, Mr. Jericho," said the wife—"I trust you have not been eating opium? I have seen horrible examples in the East, and—no, you have not been eating opium, Jericho?"

"Pooh! Opium! No drug in the world could make a man feel so happy as I am now," and Jericho snapt his fingers, and cut a caper. "Why, it's a bit of paradise."

"He doesn't look mad," thought Mrs. Jericho, a little anxious.

"I feel as if I had got new blood, new flesh, new bones, new brain! Wonderful!" Jericho trod up and down the room, and snapt his fingers; now suddenly stopt at Mrs. Jericho, and —startled woman! she herself could hardly believe it—and put his hand tenderly beneath her chin, and inflicted upon her lips a vigorous kiss.

"Jericho! Well, this is stranger than everything," said the astonished wife.

"You cannot think, Sabilla, how happy I do feel," and Jericho threw himself in his chair, and rubbed his hands, and still looked joyously about him. "Something's going to happen."

"Perhaps a new vein in the mines?" suggested Mrs. Jericho.

"Perhaps," said Jericho, a little dubiously.

"And now, my dear, about this party to Jogtrot Hall? Are we to go?"

"Go! Of course," said Jericho. "Let the dear girls go. I should be a monster to refuse them. Besides, it's only right they should go. And Basil, too. A noble youth; a little too fond of rats and dogs,—but a noble young fellow. Some day, no doubt, he'll be an honour to the bench. Fal lal de ral, lal, lal," and Jericho's full spirit overflowed in song.

"It will not take a great deal of money, after all," said Mrs. Jericho.

"How much?" asked her husband, with a blithe carelessness.

"I think a hundred pounds—because I want the girls on such an occasion to make a blow—I do almost think, yes, I am nearly sure that a hundred pounds, for we must have a few trinkets, will do pretty well."

"A hundred pounds, after all, isn't much," said Jericho, airily.

"Not with a great, a vital object in view," responded his wife.

"And as the world goes," said Jericho, "people who would be somebody must make an appearance."

"It is the compulsion of our artificial state of life: I wish it were otherwise. But as it is so, my dear,—you'll let me have the money?"

At this question a strangely pleasurable thrill passed through the breast of Jericho: his heart glowed and expanded as it had never done before; and he felt his hand drawn—as though some fairy pulled at either finger end—to his bosom. His bare hand pressed his heart, that, at the pressure, gave a sudden and delicious flutter.

"You will let me have the money?" repeated Mrs. Jericho.

Jericho answered not a word, but withdrew his hand from his breast: between his finger and his thumb he held, in silver purity, a virgin Bank of England note!

"What a dear, good creature you are, Jericho;"—said his wife—"to surprise me in this manner! To bring a note for the exact amount with you! Just a hundred! Well, you are a love," and hastily pressing him round the neck, Mrs. Jericho ran from the room, as though embarrassed by the freedom.

And Jericho sat, with his heart beating the faster. Again, he placed his hand to his breast; again drew forth another Bank note. He jumped to his feet; tore away his dress, and running to a mirror, saw therein reflected, not human flesh; but over the region of his heart a loose skin of Bank paper, veined with marks of ink. He touched it; and still in his hand there lay another note!

His thoughtless wish had been wrought into reality. Solomon Jericho was, in very truth, a Man made of Money!

CHAPTER V.

Jogtrot Hall was the one central grandeur, the boast and the comfort of Marigolds ; a village, it may be, overlooked, unknown to the town reader, although so near to London, that on soft, calm nights, with the light wind setting from the east, it is said the late villager has heard the bell of St. Paul's humming of the huge city in the deep quietude of starlit fields. As yet, the iron arms of the rail had not clipped Marigolds close to London. As yet, it lay some two hours' distant—reckoning the time by coach-horses. Therefore, it was a day of wondrous promise to the villagers, when Squire Carraways threw open the Hall to his London friends. All Marigolds glowed with satisfaction, for the Hall was as the heart of the village ; its influence felt, acknowledged at the farthest extremity. In fact, Squire Carraways was the feudal sovereign (he had, without knowing it, so crowned himself,) of the people of Marigolds. He lorded it over every fireside ; with the like power, if not with the like means, of the good old blade-and-buckler generations.

Conceive Jogtrot Hall to be the awful castle of the domain ; though, to say the truth, there was not a frown to be got from it, see it as you would. For the architects, in their various tasks, undertaken from time to time, had made the Hall a sort of brick-and-mortar joke ; a violation and a burlesque of all building. The Hall was a huge jumble ; here adorned with large beauty spots of lichen ; there with ivy ; here with jasmine and roses ; and, to be short, with a very numerous family of flowering parasites, sticking and clinging, and creeping everywhere about it. The Hall seemed to have been built bit by bit as its owners got the wherewithal : as though, only when fortune had made a good venture, the owner permitted himself to send out for additional bricks and mortar. The Hall covered, or to speak better, sprawled over half an acre of ground. And as it lay tumbled on the greensward, dressed with all coloured plants and flowers ; as its fifty windows stared, and peeped, and looked archly at you, it puzzled you which room to choose wherein to set your easy chair, and, with the fitting accessaries, therein to take a long, deep pull of blessed leisure.

And the lord of the Hall—Gilbert Carraways, merchant—had a high and dignified sense of his station. He had, perhaps, his own notions of feudality ; but such as they were, he vindicated and worked them out with a truly Saxon energy. In the first place, he hated a beggar : he had, it would almost seem, an inborn horror of a destitute man : therefore, he never permitted any misery soever—we mean the misery of want—to find harbourage in Marigolds. If, in his walks, he met with a strange starving vagrant, crawling his way to hungry death, he would immediately take up the offender, and giving strictest orders that the vagabond should be well looked after, that is fed—and with amended covering, and a shilling in his pocket, be sent forth rebuked upon his journey. As for the vassals, or villagers, the Lord of the Hall knew every man, woman, and child ; and at certain times, would call them to strict account. He would so carry it even in their homes, that he knew—as winter came—how many blankets were in every cottage, what logs of wood, and what store of coals. He would moreover busy himself with the meanest circumstances of the meanest mortality ; for example, in such mishaps as the death of a cow, a horse, nay, even pigs, when the property of a labouring villager. He would thereupon resolve himself into a jury of inquiry ; and satisfied with the evidence, would replace the cow, give another horse, send a pig or two from his own store. Moreover, this lord in the deep vaults of his Hall had captives buried from the light for ten and twenty years : and these at Christmas and at holiday times he would set free for the especial merriment of the folk of Marigolds.

Jogtrot Hall was partly surrounded by an advance guard of magnificent elms : huge, sturdy timber, with the wrinkles of some two hundred years in their bark : but green and flourishing, and alive and noisy with a colony of rooks, the descendants of a long flight of undisturbed ancestry. Between the elms, and lifted on a gentle rise of ground, Jogtrot Hall looked down with smiling, hospitable face. There was no rampant lion over the gates ; no eagle, ready to swoop upon the new comer. You approached the door through a double hedge of holly, winding up the slope ; a double line of green-liveried guards bristling and berried. Two peacocks cut in yew — the bird crest of former occupants —were perched at the upper end on either side. Their condition, in the midst of flourishing beauty, gave warning of its fleetness. They were fast withering. One bird was dying from the head ; the other from the tail ; they looked forlorn and blighted ; an eyesore amidst health and freshness. Nevertheless, Carraways would not suffer them to be cut down. "In the first place," he would say, "it would be a mean act towards those who had lived there before him : to the original owners of the peacocks. And secondly, in the sunniest seasons the dying birds preached a sermon, nothing the less solemn because to a rustling, fine-dressed congregation of leaves and flowers."

Now, whatever discourse the peacocks may have held to the master of the domain, we have no belief that the dying preachers will obtain a moment's attention from the crowd of visitors now on their way from London, to eat and drink, and dance and sing, and to act love and to make enmity, to embrace one another and to pick one another to pieces, for half-a-day's happiness at Jogtrot Hall. Family parties, gatherings of friends and acquaintances, came with every week to the house; but this was a day special—a day set apart for the reception of a multitude. Never, since Carraways had come down to the village, had Marigolds been so roused. The day was, we say, a general festival. All the folks were in their best: and the schoolmaster and schoolmistress—both functionaries paid from the privy purse of Jogtrot Hall—gave their boys and girls a holiday, that, in their cleanest attire, and with big nosegays stuck in their bosoms and held in their hands, they might, as small retainers of the Lord of the Hall, do honour to him and pleasure to themselves.

For three hours at least the children and the younger villagers had been prepared, arranged in seemly rows, to confront the fine, the awful folks from London. "They 're coming now, Jenny," said a young fellow, "take care of yourself;" and familiarly pressing the arm of a fair, slim country girl, who stood in the doorway of White, the schoolmaster — a place where she had the best claim to be, for in truth she was the schoolmaster's daughter—the earnest adviser, Robert Topps by name, ran at his best speed back to the Hall. And now, on one side of the road, the boys' school, with old White at their head, and his daughter at the threshold, with her fair pink face a little flustered by expectation, and perhaps by the counsel of Bob Topps,—on one side, the boys' school, with flowers and green boughs, is on tiptoe with the first cheer; and immediately opposite, the girls' school of Marigolds, under the firm and temperate direction of Mrs. Blanket, schoolmistress, duly prepared with a flourish of handkerchiefs; one or two of the more impulsive threatening to shout and flourish very much out of season.

At this turn of the road, reader,—this one whereby the carriages must sweep to the Hall, receiving as they pass, the fire of either scholarhood — we have an excellent view of the guests. How the ladies—spick and span from the mint of fashion—bring, in their caps, and bonnets, and hoods, and gowns, the most delightful wonders to the folks of Marigolds! It is London splendour, in all its mystery, brought to their doorways. If hats and caps were new stars, they would not be stared at with halt so much wonderment. And now — there is a very narrow turning further up the road — the carriages go so slowly, that the young scholars, boys as well as girls, feel abashed to cheer in the fixed presence of the fine people. It is only when the line loosens, and the carriages roll quicklier on, that the children take new courage and shout and pipe their welcome.

We do not propose to introduce every guest to the reader,—merely two or three of the folks ; and for this reason. As the reader will never again meet with the great body of the gathering, we shall suffer whole clouds of lace and muslin to drive on, like the lovely clouds over our head, with passing admiration, but with no hope of further knowledge of their lustre. The few persons whom we propose to make known will form part of the acquaintance of the traveller through this book, should he gird his loins to journey to the end.

That lady ripening in the sun beneath a pink parasol, is the Hon. Miss Candituft. You will be kind enough to look very attentively, yet withal deferentially, at that lady ; and for this reason : it is to her enlarged knowledge of the true elements of society—as she has been known to call them—that you are indebted for the condescending attendance of the distinguished people who will this day eat, drink, and make merry at Jogtrot Hall. It was the good fortune of Miss Carraways to meet Miss Candituft abroad, travelling with her brother, the Hon. Cesar Candituft, whose baggage—with a large sum of money—had been secretly cut from his vehicle by the guilty hands of a demoralised banditti ! The Carraways were then making a tour ; they were very servicable to the Candituft, and a friendship began between the two young women that grew fast and close as ivy. Miss Candituft is called a fine woman ; has been so called for some years. Her face, you perceive, is large and classical ; very pale, and very full of intellect. There is only one reason why she is not married—the men are afraid of her. We think it only right to give this fact the widest publicity, to proclaim it with the most significant emphasis ; it is so frequent a calamity, and yet so unsuspected by the principal sufferers. They know not—they who have eaten so much of the tree of knowledge, swallowing fruit, pips, leaves, twigs, bark and all—they know not how terrible they make themselves to a bachelor man. He may be six feet high, with shoulders broad as a table, and yet—we have known it—before such a woman his heart has melted into water. He has held his hand to her, with all the old feeling that he held forth his palm to the school ferula. Let Minerva take this axiom to her cool crystal breast —If she would condescend to marry, she must consent to leave her owl at home. Now, Miss Candituft would always carry the pet to parties with her ; and, we have given the result. The men —poor birds !—were alarmed, and fluttered away from her. Nevertheless, she had a fine look : a very white skin, a large —a little icy, perhaps—full, blue eye ; a close, controlled mouth ; a well-cut, very high-bred nose ; and large long twists of amber-coloured ringlets, dancing in her lap, like burnished snakes. For all this, men walked about her as though her very beauties were combustible—destructive. And knowing their fears, at length she never spared them.

The Hon. Cesar Candituft sits beside his sister. Could we get behind those scenes that every man carries in his brain—(acting, with his tongue and eyes, just so much of the play as seems fit to him)—it is not improbable that we should behold the gentleman levelling this hedge—widening this road—pulling down that scrubby row of cottages,—and making many other improvements, by anticipation, in his property of Marigolds. *His* property, when he shall marry Bessy Carraways ; and her father—finally put aside from the mildew of the city—shall sleep in the village church beneath a substantial covering of very handsome marble. With the hopes, nay the certainty of marrying old Carraways' heiress, it was not Mr. Candituft's fault if these very natural thoughts would present themselves. Certainly not. Who can control thought ? Who can dismiss it, like an insolent servant ? Who, too, can prophesy, what thought the dial-finger on the next minute will bring him ? We are thus earnest in common-place, that we may attempt to excuse Cesar Candituft ; of all men—all men say it of him—the most kind,—the most obliging ; nay, the most forgiving. Let Candituft have an enemy seeking him with a drawn sword ; and Candituft, with no more than a rose in his hand, will strike away the blade ; and in a quarter of an hour make the wicked fellow ashamed of himself, that he could feel a moment's anger against so good, so calm, so generous a creature as Candituft. Good, noble, sagacious Candituft ! They who know him best, call him the Man-Tamer.

That old tall man, with a very big head on a thin stalk of neck, is Colonel Bones. He goes everywhere. He looks vulgar and grubby ; yet is he accounted as costly clay among a certain number of very worthy Christians ; as precious as is Jerusalem earth to exiled Hebrews. He gives himself out as prodigiously poor ; but people, in these times, are not to be gulled. The world—(that is, the kernel of the world—for the world is as a cocoa-nut ; there is the vulgar outside fibre, to be made into door-mats and ropes; the hard shell, good for beer-cups; and the white, delicate kernel, the real worth, food for the gods)—the world knows the secret of Colonel Bones. Ingenuous old soul! He believes the world will take him at his word; will receive him as the pauper he declares himself. Sly Colonel! The world knows better. The world, in its winding sagacity, has worked out the truth; and, therefore, with a good-tempered smile, gives a very pleasant reason for all the oddities of the good, dear, old Colonel. He will not afford himself the luxury of a carriage; therefore, a carriage is always sent for him. He will not take care of himself at his own table; and therefore he must always dine with one of his best friends. Why, it was only last winter that, having bound himself by previous promise to grant the request of a petitioner, he consented to become godfather, with the enforced proviso that he should *not* give his godson a single ounce of plate. Up to this moment the child—Bones Mizzlemist, eldest son of Mizzlemist of Doctors' Commons—is without a mug. Colonel Bones—he served somewhere in some regiment at some date in the militia—Colonel Bones insists upon playing the pauper on an annuity of fifty pounds, and the world lets the poor old fellow have his feeble whim, his little joke. Very right; an old man, and to be humoured.

That slight young man, with the handsome face of blank meaning (a fine lamp with no light in it), is Sir Arthur Hodmadod. He is scarcely cool in his baronetcy, having only succeeded to the title in the spring. He bows to Miss Candituft a little timidly; for even yet he does not feel himself altogether safe. He looks at her as though he still beheld in her the dread possibility of Lady Hodmadod. However, he takes heart, and rides up to the carriage.—Only hear him.

"That's a nice thing there;" and Hodmadod points towards Jenny White, the schoolmaster's daughter.

"Where?" asks Miss Candituft, opening her eyes to take in everybody.

"There; that thing with the—what is it?—the silver bee; isn't it a bee? buttoning the black riband at her throat."

"Yes, it is a bee," says Miss Candituft, using her glass; and then staring at the baronet. "It is a bee. Ha, Sir Arthur! What an aquiline eye you have! Not even a bee escapes you! Well, it is a bee."

"Really, a beautiful thing. So white, and pink, and smooth; so like Dresden china, you might put the wench upon a mantelpiece. Eh?" and Hodmadod looks for the lady's opinion.

Miss Candituft stares at Sir Arthur; she did not expect to be appealed to upon so domestic an arrangement. And then, without winking, and with a fixed wondering face, Miss Candituft says, "I don't know."

"Charming thing!" And the uneasy Hodmadod turns in his saddle to look at Jenny. "A child of nature!"

"You think so?" asks Miss Candituft, with a searching emphasis, that somehow goes through the baronet.

Hodmadod finds himself put upon his proofs; and in his own logical manner, hastily sets his meaning in its clearest, strongest light. "Quite a child of nature. That is, you know, when I say a child of nature, why I mean, of course, a—a perfect kitten."

"Of course; that is evident," says Miss Candituft, with her large, cold eyes in the brain of the baronet. Defenceless man! He feels his exposed condition—and touching his hat, speeds past the carriage. Well, we do not yet think him safe. Miss Candituft pursues him with such a look that, even now, we would not insure him from the life-long consequences of her resolution. However, let him flutter his hour while he may. We shall see.

On either side boys and girls set up so loud, so shrill a welcome, it is plain they have caught sight of some bit of bravery—some splendour that hitherto is the chief glory of the show. Quick and perceptive is the wit of childhood; and—they know it—the little ones have not spent their best cheer without good judgment. For look at that magnificent equipage. Four glorious horses, wearing the most superb caparison, with—it would seem—a full sense of its costliness, for everywhere it is set and bossed with precious silver—four horses, dancing—as though, like immortal steeds, they pawed the empyrean, not the Queen's highway—draw a sky-blue phaeton. There is another shout, as the vehicle turns the corner; and horses, and postilions, and carriage and company, are revealed at full. The horses seem to toss their heads, as with a sense of beauty, coquetting with the public approbation; and the postilions, in their gold-coloured satin jackets, have an assured and knowing look, and very proud of their horse-flesh, pat the beasts, as though blood was immortal, and there was not a dog in the world. And who are the company who sit in the phaeton, drinking in, as at every pore of the skin, the looks of wonder and admiration that from all sides are cast upon them? It is difficult —we feel the task—very difficult to obtain belief for the assertion; nevertheless, as faithful chroniclers, we must at any peril make it. The ladies are Mrs. Jericho and her two daughters, Miss Monica and Miss Agatha Pennibacker; the gentleman is Mr. Solomon Jericho.

No, sir; we are not abashed at your look of incredulity; we expected it. We had no thought that, at the word, you would take our avowal for the truth ; the folks are, every one of them, so changed ; so refined, and yet withal so enlarged. Mrs. Jericho was always a woman of commanding presence ; she could not, even when she most desired to unbend, she could not without very much ado, subside into the familiarity of gentleness. But now, she looks as though she had been passing a visit with Queen Juno, and had brought home the last large manners from Olympus. Albeit she only shares the phaeton with three others, she seems as though she filled, nay overflowed it ; manner, manner does so much. The nasty children scream, and the horrid bumpkins shout ; yet it is gratifying, very pleasant, indeed, that the phaeton (her taste,) and the postboys' jackets (her taste,) are not lost upon the creatures. Nevertheless, Mrs. Jericho will not bow ; no, not wink an eyelid in recognition of the applause ; she will receive the homage as the fealty born to. And the young ladies are worthy of their majestic mother. They are wondrously changed. They have, with all the elasticity of the female character, so sympathised with fortune in her sudden good-nature, that already she seems to them a life-long acquaintance.

Solomon Jericho is only fourteen days older since he and the reader were last together. Fourteen days only have been filtered into the sea of the past since Solomon Jericho—with a strange musical tingling of every nerve of his body ; with a lively, melodious flourish to Plutus—entered upon the mysterious cares of wealth. Whenever it pleased Solomon, he could lay his hand upon his heart, and find a hundred pounds of ready money there. Yes : we say it. When Solomon wanted real happiness, he had only to place his hand upon his heart, and he touched the ready felicity. He was mightily stirred by the first knowledge of the secret. The reader may haply remember, that ere Jericho —to his vast astonishment—drew forth the first note ; ere the property of his bosom, like a dried autumn leaf, came off into his palm, he was raised to a state of ecstasy. He felt, without knowing the cause, all the blessedness of the triumph that makes man, by force of a golden sceptre, one of the kings of the world. Earth, with all its delights, was suddenly made to him little other than one huge market, whereat he might purchase whatever took his choice. Without knowing it, he celebrated his coming of age ; the unexpected birth-day of a full-grown heir. Now this emotion passed almost as soon as Jericho was assured of possession. He himself could not have believed in the easiness of his self-accommodation to the boundlessness of money. Nevertheless, next morning he woke to fortune, as though she had always shared his pillow. Even Mrs. Jericho was astonished at the equanimity with which her husband received the gifts of luck, as vouchsafed to him from discovered veins of platina; for no, not even to the partner of his bosom, had Jericho revealed his bosom's wealth. Little, indeed, did Mrs. Jericho know the value of the heart that beat—did it really beat?—beside her. It was, in truth, the one great secret of his breast that Jericho held undiscovered from the nominal mistress of that region.

Fourteen days only has Solomon Jericho been new-made; that is, made of money; and wondrous in the new-made man is the new change! Once was he an easy, slipshod sort of fellow, with a high relish for a joke; or when the joke itself was not to be had, with anything that at a short notice could be supplied in its place. Frequently was it the painful duty of his wife to rebuke him for his humour; humour being, Mrs. Jericho would ever insist, beneath a gentleman. Now only fourteen days, and what an improvement! "Money has its duties, Mr. Jericho," the wife observed; "duties that are above a joke." And to her great satisfaction, she acknowledged that Jericho in his new dull dignity solemnly carried out her own conviction. She was almost delighted with the man; he was such an improvement upon himself. She confessed it to him.—"He had greatly improved: now he never laughed; he never joked; he never talked of people below his own station; he had given up buffoonery, and philanthropy, and vulgar notions of all kinds; and, really she must say it, he showed himself worthy of the good fortune that had fallen upon him. Moreover, she always knew—she always felt—a presentiment of what the mines would produce; hence she had borne the privations of former years without a word, without a tear. She had always loved him; and it had often caused her a struggle to disguise her affection; nevertheless, she had not thought she could love him as she did; and for this reason—she could not deny it—she had not believed in the moral dignity his wealth had developed in him. She would say it—she was proud of him!"

"Lovely weather, madam," says Basil Pennibacker, prancing up to the phaeton. "But, my dear lady, may I be permitted to ask your unprejudiced opinion of the dust?"

"A slight drawback; very slight, my love," says Mrs. Jericho, heroically. "But what a heavenly sky!"

"Over-head unexceptionable; the other extremity detestable. And with such distress as there is, old Carraways might have hired all the workhouse cheap, to weep in the highway. Such very queer dust, too!" and Basil smacks his lips. "Not at all the Rotten Row flavour. Full of sand! Agatha, duck, keep your mouth shut; or you'll be turned into an hour-glass."

"There, now, Basil, set your spurs to your gallant steed, like a good boy, and run away," says Monica.

"A wonderful animal, sir," observes Basil confidentially to Mr. Jericho. "Hallo! not well, sir?"

"Well? Admirable! Never so well," says Jericho, in a cold voice, and with a dim smile.

"'Pon my life, you look so wire-drawn and so thin! Blessed if you don't look as if you'd been locked out last night, and dragged to bed through the keyhole."

"Basil! My child!" cries Mrs. Jericho; and Jericho smiles, but dimmer than before.

"Extraordinary animal, sir," says Basil, thinking it best to return to the horse. "Only three hundred. I'm satisfied, and shall buy him. Only three hundred. Cheap, my honourable sir—cheap for a water-cart. Look at him, sir. None of your horses, put together with skewers for a day out, to tumble to the dogs as soon as they get home: shall, certainly, lay down the loyalty for him. Take care of yourself, my good sir; men like you can't be spared. Good bye, we shall meet on the daisies."

"Bye, bye," says Agatha. "Don't forget Bessy."

"Upon my life, you girls look too nice,—you do, indeed;—too nice," says Basil, holding in his horse.

"Oh!" cry the young ladies, laughing and shaking their heads. "Oh!"

"You do, indeed. Too nice to marry, and not nice enough to eat;" and Basil gives his horse his head, and bounds forward, followed by a groom, mounted worthy of the new master he attends. Mrs. Jericho smiles proudly, and looks at her husband; who industriously tries, and at length succeeds, to smile in return.

And now the great crowd of guests is set down at the Hall; and now we invite the reader to enter the house, to stray among the grounds, and to enjoy the large hospitality that from every nook and corner of the place cries—"Eat, drink, and be merry."

CHAPTER VI.

The Hon. Mr. Candituft had a genius for society. In the marks of a man's face, he could, he thought, generally interpret the marks of a man's bank-book. With an unbounded benevolence for all the world, he nevertheless—though he would not avow the instinct—best liked the acquaintance of that portion of society that, raised far above the cares of money, could do the fullest justice to the moral and spiritual, and, he would add, the tasteful and elegant man. He looked upon all mankind as brethren; but, still, preferred the elder brethren of the richest branches. And why? Possibly because it was the condition of humanity to forego so much of its original bloom and goodness in the vulgar pursuit of the vulgar means of life. Not that he did not honour even the horny hand of sordid labour. To be sure; and has been known, on more than one festive occasion, to take the said hand in his own naked palm, at the same time passing a high eulogium on the original profession of Adam. Still, it must be owned, that of the two conditions of Adam, he much preferred the landlord of Eden to the labourer outside.

"Introduce you, my dear sir? To be sure—not that there's any need of introduction at Jogtrot Hall; think it a family party, sir; a family party." Such was the cordial outspeaking of the host, Gilbert Carraways, esquire; a fine, simple, hearty, old gentleman; with a bright grey eye; and white, thin, silky hair. Time had used him like an old friend, kindly, considerately. At three score, Squire Carraways—for such was his dignity throughout Marigolds—carried his years, as a lusty reaper carries a sheaf; with ruddy face and unbent back. "I say to you again, my good friend," cried the host to Candituft, "think it a family party."

"My dear sir," said the Hon. Cesar Candituft, catching the hand of his host, and looking almost pathetically into his face, "my dear sir, would that we all had your benevolence! Would that all the world could be brought to think all the world a family party! Look at that man, sir; that very brown man, sir,"—and Candituft pointed to an Indian juggler, who, hired for the day, was crossing the grounds to begin the show,—"look at that deep-dyed individual, sir; why, I can consider him my brother."

"Very kind of you," said Carraways; who, hooking his thumbs into his waistcoat pockets, looked a little slyly at the philanthropist. "You never come into the City? Hm! you'd be dreadfully shocked to see so many of your relations with brooms."

"Of course," said Candituft, as the best thing he could say. "But, my dear sir—here he is—introduce me."

At this moment, Jericho, between his wife and eldest daughter, marched slowly up.

"Mr. Jericho, Mr. Candituft — the Hon. Mr. Candituft," said Carraways: and, turning from the newly-known brethren, the host took Mrs. Jericho and Monica under his charge.

"You'll find us somewhere, Jericho," said the wife. "We must join dear Mrs. Carraways."

"And sweet Bessy," cried the emphatic Monica.

"Really, Mrs. Jericho, I should like to see your husband look somewhat stouter. Isn't he a—a little thin?" asked Carraways.

"Oh, dear, no! not at all," answered Mrs. Jericho, quite eagerly. "By no means."

"Papa, you know, was always thin," said Miss Pennibacker, so very confidently, that Carraways felt he ought to be mistaken. It was clear—Jericho was always thin.

"Well, well, it's my blunder; yet, I thought, perhaps the shock of sudden property——By the way, I'm glad to hear such wonders of the mines."

"Very kind of you, dear Mr. Carraways. But"—added Mrs. Jericho, philosophically and sonorously — "after all, what is money? Money cannot bestow happiness."

"Why, perhaps not," said the merchant host; "nevertheless, it often supplies a good imitation of the article. Come, come, you mustn't abuse money, Mrs. Jericho. That's the rightful privilege of people who can't get it."

"Dear Mrs. Carraways! Well, this is lovely! Quite oriental! Superb!" cried Mrs. Jericho, with deepening emphasis greeting the lady of the place. "I vow, it takes one quite back to the Persian poets."

"Very good company, no doubt," said Carraways, laughing: "but, after all, I rather prefer this to any gardens on foolscap. Better company, too"—and the old gentleman bent gallantly to Mrs. Jericho and Monica—"much better company than the best of people, made of the best of ink. My dear," said Carraways to his wife, "where 's Bessy?"

"Oh yes! Where is dear Bessy?" cried Monica, with tremulous anxiety. Mrs. Carraways nodded towards a party of dancers, where was Bessy Carraways—a girl, whose best beauty was the open goodness of her face—dancing with Sir Arthur Hodmadod: Miss Candituft apart smiling—as the Spartan young gentleman smiled with the fox that fed upon him — and following Bessy with speaking eyes, and shaking her golden tresses, and beating her silver foot in blithe accompaniment of the measure.

"How beautiful is Bessy to-day!" said Miss Candituft, joining Bessy's father and mother.

"Quite delicious," cried Miss Pennibacker to Bessy's mother; and Miss Candituft swerved her fair neck, and opened her cold eyes at Monica, as though resenting any admiration of so interesting a subject as a trespass upon her own monopoly of love. And then she said, with new fervour—"She carries all hearts with her."

"She is *so* beautiful," again interposed Monica. — Again Miss Candituft stared.

"Why, as for that, she's very good—and very like her mother," said Carraways, and then he laughed at his wife, and added —"and so we won't talk so much about the beauty. However, perhaps I 'm grown too old to judge;" and the father looked towards his child, and his face glowed with pride and pleasure as she nodded to him, and wove in and out the dance young, healthful, and happy as a nymph.

"Ugh! Mr. Carraways,—this is too good; too fine; too grand for poor folks. It's cruel of you — sheer barbarity, sir, hard-hearted pride of purse, nothing better. Cruel, sir; cruel," gasped Colonel Bones, offering his hand to the hostess, then to the host, and then making a courteous sweeping bow to the ladies; for Bones was gallant to the last.

"What, then, Colonel" — cried Miss Candituft — "you don't enjoy this Elysium? You don't like to tread upon asphodel?"

"An insult to poverty, Miss Candituft — an insult;" and Colonel Bones smiled a hard smile, and his dark, deep sunk eyes twinkled from behind his ragged eyebrows. "Too bad of our host to drag a beggar like me here: really too bad. Tyrannous, tyrannous to scourge poverty with golden rods. Hm?" And the Colonel looked around.

"I dare say you can bear it, Colonel," answered Miss Candituft, staring at him, and reading in the human antiquity the hidden mystery of wealth. Before the eyes of the far-seeing spinster the heart of Colonel Bones lay all revealed; open, discovered, like the valley of diamonds. "You can bear it;" and saying this, the smiling lady drew the very best flower from her bouquet, and threaded it in the Colonel's button-hole.

"Ugh!" said Colonel Bones, with a grim smile looking down upon the operation. "Ugh! Winter, winter adorned by spring. Oh dear! Why will you take such pains to spoil a beggar? Eh? Hm?" ended the Colonel, with his usual spasm of interrogation.

At this moment Candituft and Jericho advanced to the party. Colonel Bones, with a sudden jerk, was moving off, when Candituft stept forward with open hand.

"Ugh! No, sir; I can't do it—I won't do it. The fact is, sir,—though this is not the place to name it—the fact is, it was I, Colonel Bones, who on Saturday last black-balled you at the Cut-and-come." Thus spoke Bones, and somewhat defyingly.

"My good Colonel," said Candituft very meekly, "I know it, what then? It was a mistake."

"No mistake at all, sir; not a bit: I'd do it again to-morrow. Wouldn't I? Hm?"

"Because, my dear Colonel, you don't know me. Ignorance causes all the family quarrels of the brotherhood of man. I lament your error; but I have no malice. And what is human life,—what is moral dignity, if it can't live down these small mistakes? The brotherhood of man, my dear sir."

"Eh? What? There you are; at it again, Candituft! The brotherhood of man! When you come out to enjoy yourself, why the devil can't you leave all your poor relations at home?"

"Ha! Commissioner, glad to see you. Why, you look as flourishing and as bountiful as one of your own bread-trees. It's food and lodging to behold you." This was the ready, flattering reply of Candituft to a short, thick, very black, and very red man, who had the look of having been dried like pepper, hard and hot, in a fiery climate; though there were people who, when Commissioner Thrush talked of his travels in Siam, stared very doubtingly upon the boastful rover. Be such doubts just or unjust, the Commissioner made a very good use of the king of Siam; putting off upon the royal whim, or royal wisdom, his own jest. Thus, when Commissioner Thrush wanted to shoot at impertinence or folly, he would very modestly shoot with the king of Siam's proper long-bow.

"Why, my dear good Thrush, will you so speak of human nature?" asked the indomitable Candituft. "Why will you take such pains to hide that noble heart of yours? That heart enlarged by travel—softened by experience—purified by"——

"Well, it's wonderful," said the Commissioner, scrutinising the cheek of the Man-Tamer—"wonderful how you can do it. But you talk of hearts and homes, and keep your face like a figure-head. It's a good thing, Candituft, you ar'n't in Siam. They'd put you in petticoats; they would, sir; for life—without hope of pardon, sir, for the term of your natural life. In petticoats."

"Ugh!" cried Colonel Bones with a sneering grin, "shouldn't a bit wonder. What for? Hm?"

"You see, Colonel, it is the custom of the king of Siam—or was, when I knew him, for let me be particular—it was his Majesty's custom, when any of his ministers, or judges, or generals, or people of that sort of kidney, persisted in doing or talking of matters they didn't understand—not that I insinuate anything of the sort against our friend Candituft—by no means; don't mistake me—it was the king's custom, I say, to make his ministers, for the rest of their days, wear nothing else but the cast-off clothes of the oldest women in his dominions. When I left Siam, which is now—how time flies!—a good while ago, there were three prime ministers, one chancellor of the exchequer, a chief justice, and two field marshals, all in old women's petticoats, sir. And for life! What do you think of that?"

"For my part," said Carraways, "I must think the old ladies much scandalised by the practice. But, Jericho, I want you"—

"Why, it isn't Jericho!" cried Thrush, rushing up to our Man of Money, and laying hold of his coat with both hands—"It can't be Jericho! Only a dividend of him. As I'm alive, you don't look a shilling in the pound of yourself."

"Looks, sir—looks,"—said Jericho, with a dignity that did his wife's heart good—"are the cheats of the simple. If, however, I do look thin, be assured I've my own private reasons for it. May I have the pleasure, madam?"—and Jericho offered his arm to Miss Candituft, her brother having introduced Jericho, and being with his sister introduced to Jericho's wife and daughter in honourable return. Jericho made for a distant crowd, gathered about the juggler. "Very odd, madam, that people can't keep their foolish opinions under their own hats," said Jericho: and Miss Candituft—forewarned by a significant look, an emphatic whisper from her brother—jumped instantly to the like conclusion. Indeed Miss Candituft had very quickly gathered the Jericho family to her bunch of treasured friends: adding them readily as new flowers to chosen blossoms.

"Well, Mr. Jericho is certainly not so stout as he was," said Mrs. Carraways to Jericho's wife, "but then I think he looks a great deal better. He was a little *too* stout," suggested the good-natured hostess.

"Decidedly too stout," said Mrs. Jericho. "He wanted activity of mind and body. I have prevailed upon him of late to take exercise and he is a great deal better. But, really, it would seem as if there was a general conspiracy to frighten the poor man out of the world. Absolutely a wicked design to throw me into the despair of widowhood." And then, as tearing herself with a wrench from the idea, Mrs. Jericho blandly suggested —"Let us follow the world, and go to the juggler."

Candituft, Colonel Bones, and Commissioner Thrush slowly trod the greensward. "Why," said Thrush, "money seems to have taken all the colour out of him. He was a jolly fellow, red and ripe as a peach ; and now—I wonder if he's made his will. Depend upon it, he won't live long."

"Don't say that ! Dear fellow — I mean, poor creature ! Dreadful times for such people to die, when by living"—and Candituft with finger at his cheek, shook his head—"they could do so much good to the family of man. Really, Mr. Jericho ought to have the best advice."

"Ugh ! If he's so very rich, Candituft, you'll bestow advice gratis," grinned Bones. "You'll feel his pulse,—I'm sure of that. Now a beggar like me—a pensioner upon a crust—can't hope for such a doctor. Hm ?"

"Ha, Colonel ! You know you may say anything. You know you may use your friends as you please ; you can't offend 'em. They know your heart,"—said Candituft — "and what matters the rest ?"

"I say, Colonel, you'll remember Candituft in your will for all this ?" said Thrush.

"My will ! Ugh !" cried Colonel Bones. "When I die, I shall leave—I shall leave—the world."

"Talking of wills," said Thrush, returning to his self-laid trap, "talking of wills, there was an odd thing happened in Siam."

"No doubt. Odd if there hadn't," cried Candituft, smiling with confidence on the unmoved Bones.

"You'll like to hear it, Candituft. Very odd. There was an old muckthrift died, and left to the dear friend that had best flattered him a curious bequest. You'll never guess it—it was a jar of treacle, mixed with caterpillars."

"Disgusting !" cried Candituft.

"Good ! devilish good !" laughed Colonel Bones.

"And so it became a saying in Siam. Whenever," said Thrush, with a leer at the Man-Tamer—"whenever a man coaxed and flattered another for his own ends, folks would say—'He's laying on the treacle, and may come in for the caterpillars.' And this, I assure you was in Siam."

"Charming ! excellent ! quite a delicious apologue !" said Candituft, with a smile that declared him invulnerable. "You are a happy fellow, Thrush. When you are most bitter, you are most wholesome. It's impossible not to relish you. After a talk with you, I feel my morals braced, toned I may say, for a month. Capital fellow!" And Candituft laid his outspread hand affectionately on Thrush's shoulder.

"Hallo! Basil, boy, how d'ye do?" said Thrush to young Pennibacker, who, looking anxiously about him, ran upon the party. "'Pon my word, you haven't done growing yet. Why, how you've shot up this last month!"

"No doubt, my dear sir; climb like a honeysuckle. But the truth is, we talk of the degeneracy of the age. I've found out the cause, sir; it's straps. They hold down the free-born Briton, sir; they dwarf a giant race, sir. Every man, if he likes, has his discovery; straps are mine."

"Admirable!" cried Candituft, with convulsive laughter; for Basil had already been shown to the Man-Tamer as the son-in-law of the gorgeous Jericho. "Most ingenious; and yet most simple discovery! Ha! ha!"

"That's it, sir," said Basil, taking quick measure of Candituft—"that's it. We look abroad for causes, when the thing is under our foot. What has lowered the standard of the British army?—straps. Why, in these days, sir, have we no high drama, sir—no high art? Straps, sir; straps. Men are tied to their boots, and can't reach it. Why have we no political greatness, sir? Why does an unprincipled minister every night of his parliamentary existence violate the spotless constitution?"

"Ugh! Hear! Hear! Hm?" cried Colonel Bones, and he rubbed his big, raw hands.

"Why have we no public spirit left, sir? Why do we not rise against tyranny, and taxation, and free trade, and the Pope? The disgrace and the answer, gentlemen, are in one crushing syllable—straps!"

"Hear! hear! hear! Loud cheers!" cried Candituft. At this moment, Bessy, under the protection of Miss Candituft, was crossing the lawn, when Basil, without further word, immediately broke from his audience. Candituft, however, with some sudden and violent commendation of Basil's vivacious talent, instantly followed.

"My dear lady," said Basil, sweeping off his hat, and reddening and stammering somewhat—"may I now beg the goodness of your promise? These little work-people of yours"——

"Really, Mr. Pennibacker, you'll not care about them," said Bessy, in a voice made sweeter by her simple, affectionate looks. 'But if you really wish to see them"——

"Yes, yes; that's right, Bessy. It's a sight that may do the young men of our day good," said old Carraways, coming up with a host of visitors, Mrs. Jericho and Monica being of the number. "It will be a change, too, from the juggler. By the way—that poor brother of yours, Mr. Candituft"——

"Brother, Mr. Carraways!" cried Candituft; and then he recollected the human relationship, and warmly smiled, and said —"Oh yes! very true; to be sure."

"He earns his daily mutton hard enough. I never knew such tricks. Ha! ha! Stock Exchange is nothing to it," said Carraways; and he led the way between high laurel hedges—winding and winding—until he came into a small garden. Here the company heard clamorous shouts of laughter. The quiet, well-bred mirth of the party seemed to have migrated hither to break loose into the largest enjoyment. A few paces, and a happy scene revealed itself. The garden was skirted by a hay-field. A heavy second crop had blessed the land. Some thirty or forty of the youngest and sprightliest of the visitors were making hay; and—one or two or three in a violent spirit of romps—were pitching the hay at one another. "Ha! ha! ha! I like this," cried Carraways. "Well, I do think that young folks never look so happy or so handsome as when they're making hay. What say you, Mrs. Jericho?"

"I was ever of that sentiment," said Mrs. Jericho, with one of her fullest smiles. "'Tis so pastoral—so innocent; so far away from the fastidious conventionalities of life." And then Mrs. Jericho darkly frowned, and suddenly squeezing her daughter Monica by the arm, and whispering anxiously between her maternal teeth, cried—"That never can be your sister, Agatha!" But it was; and the flushed delinquent—with a sharp, chirping laugh—was at the moment throwing a wisp of hay at Sir Arthur Hodmadod, who had evidently made up his mind to receive it as the largest of blessings.

"It *is* Agatha," said Monica, sharing more than her mother's trouble at the exposure; for she much wondered that her younger sister could take such freedom with a baronet.

"Don't mind Sir Arthur," said Miss Candituft in her own sympathetic way, to the anxious parent. "Nobody minds him. He hasn't the genius to be even dangerous." Mrs. Jericho stared, and then smiled and jerked her head, at once acknowledging and despising the information.

In a minute the disturbed merry-makers, as suddenly grave as they might be, joined the party, Carraways laughing and giving them heartiest praise for their romps. "That's it! I love to see people not ashamed to enjoy themselves after their own hearts. For my part, I never see a haycock that I don't wish to go plump head over heels into it. I think, somehow, it's an instinct of the natural family of man, eh, Mr. Candituft?"

"No doubt, my dear sir," said Candituft; "not the least doubt—a remnant of Eden that still sweetens the fall."

"Agatha, I am ashamed of you," whispered Mrs. Jericho to her red-faced daughter as she sidled up. The next moment Sir Arthur Hodmadod, with a gay confident look, proffered to the rebuked Agatha an arm of the baronetage. The motion was not lost upon the scrupulous Monica; who—to comfort her mother—immediately whispered—"And I'm ashamed of her, too, ma."

"Here we are," cried Carraways, halting at an apiary of the trimmest and prettiest order. "Here's Bessy's work-people. And I can tell you, charming it is to see them coming in and going out; and delightful to meet 'em in the fields—for upon my life, I sometimes think they know us—as they go bouncing, buzzing by."

"I'm sure they know me, papa," said Bessy; and then she modestly added—"at least I think so."

"Ugh! They must know you," said Colonel Bones; "bees, bees must be the best judges of flowers. Hm?"

"Delicious! A sweet thought, Colonel," said Candituft. "Excellent!"

"It is very pretty," cried Hodmadod, surveying the apiary. "So nicely thatched, too; so very snug. I call it"—said the baronet with authority—"I call it quite a bijou."

"Do you, indeed?" asked Agatha, all smiles.

"I do," said Sir Arthur; "that is, when I say a bijou, I mean—of course—a picture."

"The inference is so plain," said Miss Candituft, and she looked in that wild moment at the flushed Agatha as though she could have bitten her bold, red cheek.

"Wonderful creatures, bees!" cried Hodmadod. "Only to think that such little things should make all the wax candles!" There was a pause, when the modest baronet asked—"They do make all the wax candles, eh? don't they?"

"Make everything in wax," said Basil. "Wonderfully arranged, sir. The white bees make wax; and the black bees—the nigger bees—make pitch."

"Very well; very good; but no—I can't quite believe that. Still, it is wonderful. And Miss Carraways, permit me to ask"—said Hodmadod—"do your labourers here work all the year round?"

"Not all the year, Sir Arthur," answered the smiling Bessy.

"Ha! I see; the bees have a recess. Ha! ha! They're like us in Parliament," said Hodmadod. "Ha! ha!"

"Oh, very like you in Parliament," cried the cool, cutting Miss Candituft.

" That is, when I say that bees are like members of Parliament, I don't mean "—explained the logical Hodmadod—" I don't mean that members of Parliament make wax candles, you know."

" No, no, no," cried Carraways with a laugh ; and the company, to be relieved, would see a joke, and laughed most heartily ; Hodmadod still laughing loudest.

" But we are not the only bee-keepers," said Mrs. Carraways. " We have what we call our honey-feasts. And you should only see Bessy's silver bees."

" Silver bees ! Well, that is strange. Now I call it curious," —cried Hodmadod—" but on the road, I did see a silver bee settled—when I say settled, of course I mean buckled—on the throat of a nice little girl. Wasn't she, Miss Candituft ? "

" A very pretty, fair thing with flaxen hair," remarked Miss Candituft.

" That's Jenny White. She's the silver bee of this year ; you see, it's a whim of our Bessy's "—Mrs. Carraways would talk, regardless of Bessy's looks—" to give prizes every year to the folks hereabout whose hives weigh most honey. Besides these prizes, there's a silver bee to be worn on holidays."

" 'Pon my word," said Hodmadod, " I think I shall take a cottage here, and enter myself for the stakes. When I say myself, of course I mean my bees, because I couldn't very well go into a lily,—eh ? "

" Not in boots," said Basil with a knowing clench.

Here Topps winding his way round the company, with importance in his looks, made up to his master. " This way," cried Carraways, giving his arm to Mrs. Jericho. " I think I know where we can light upon the merry-thought of a chicken."

In a very few minutes, the host was seated at the head of the table under a long, wide tent. On the table were the most delicious proofs of the earth's goodness ; with every kitchen mystery. And these vanished, and were replaced, and guests came and went, and came and went ; and so the hours flew, eating, drinking, laughing, and dancing by ; until the stars came out, and the music played more noisily, and the merriment grew louder and louder.

Some twenty or thirty were seated together. Mr. Jericho, taciturn and dignified, graced the board. Candituft sat next him ; and with others, among whom were Commissioner Thrush, and the miserly Colonel Bones, clubbed their share of mirth. An elderly gentleman, pock-marked, with a pink nose, had been particularly silent ; admiring, when and where required, with soberest discretion. And now, for the past half hour, he had been seized with a passion to drink everybody's health. This vinous philanthropist was Doctor Mizzlemist of Doctors' Commons. He had at last discovered the great duty of life; and was resolved to perform it. For the third time he rose to give "the health of Solomon Jericho, Esquire, an honour to his country." For the third time, the Doctor dwelt upon the hidden virtues of his excellent toast, emphasizing them with a dessert fork, which never failed in its downward descent to make three marks upon the table. Finally, wrought into enthusiasm by a contemplation of his subject, Doctor Mizzlemist delivered himself with such energy, that at the same time he struck the fork between the bones of Jericho's right hand, pinning it where it lay. The planted weapon trembled in the mahogany. Mr. Jericho's head was at the moment turned aside. A shout from the company proclaimed some calamity. Mr. Jericho slowly turning, saw the fork still quivering in his flesh. He calmly withdrew the weapon from the wood, laid it down, passed his palm over his bloodless hand, and with a smile said—"It's nothing."

"What wonderful forbearance!" "What extraordinary firmness!" thought the company, and still they looked strangely, curiously at the serene, the philosophic Jericho.

The fireworks died in darkness—the lamps twinkled fainter and fainter—and at some hour in the morning the last vehicle rolled from the gate of Jogtrot Lodge.—Perhaps, some four hours before the postman delivered his letters at the house of Carraways in the City.

CHAPTER VII.

"SIX inches less round the body, as I'm a sinner! Six inches less, Mr. Jericho, and I last took your measure only six weeks ago." Thus spoke Breeks, the tailor, holding his strip of parchment to the eye of the attenuated Jericho. "I never did know such a shrink."

"I'm glad of it," said Jericho with dignity. "I was fast losing my figure, Breeks."

"Oh dear, no!" said Breeks. "A little stout, to be sure: but noways out of character. Some people's only made to be stout, and nothing else. And now in six weeks six inches!

Why, in a twelvemonth, do you know what that'll come to? Eh?"

"You will measure me without observation, Mr. Breeks," said Jericho, "or not measure me at all."

The faintest, briefest "Oh!" rounded the mouth of Breeks, and with tenderest touch he proceeded in his task. It is at least one of the humanising beauties of credit that it begets familiarity. Debt despises the distance of ceremony. Now Breeks had for many years made for Jericho; and Jericho was never above the tailor's joke. There might be a reason for this. Breeks was never in a hurry to push. His bills were like oak-leaves; new ones always grew under the old.

Breeks took his measures in silence. He knew that Jericho was become rich, and therefore felt that he, the rich man's tailor, must become dull and respectful. Ready money was, after all, better than a ready laugh. "Shall I allow anything, sir, for"—and Breeks held the body of Jericho as in a parchment bridle—"anything for stoutness? It may come, sir, when you least expect it?"

"A little, just a little, Breeks. Though I don't think I'm a bit thinner than—than many people?"

"Not a bit, sir: and then, sir, where natur' leaves us we can always lay hold upon art. Flesh"—said Breeks, waving his arm—"flesh may fall away, but paddin's contin'ally with us."

"Just so! and therefore, Breeks, you may give a little puff—just the smallest roundness"—

"I know, sir; just an ounce or two more flesh in the waistcoat. It shall be done, sir. I wish you a humble good morning, sir," and Breeks bowed in excess of homage.

"Breeks,"—a thought had come upon Jericho,—"Breeks, are you married?" Breeks stared: for how many times, years gone by, had Mrs. Breeks herself opened the door to Mr. Jericho!

Breeks delicately resented this forgetfulness of the man of money. With a low bow, the tailor replied—"I am not *yet* a widower, Mr. Jericho."

"Ha! To be sure. Hm"—mused Jericho,—"then it's out of the question; otherwise, Breeks, I might have served you."

"Mrs. Breeks, Mr. Jericho,"—replied the tailor,—"is too dootiful a wife to stand in the light of her husband. Whatever it is, may I be so bold as to say, mention it?"

"Not now—no matter—another time. Go," said Jericho; and the tailor, with an awe of the sudden dignity of money—

an awe he would not confess to—shrank from the dressing-room.

"Here's a change! After all, there's no such paddin' for human natur' as Bank-notes!" Now this is what Breeks declared to himself outside the door; and again and again repeated as he stept onward from Jericho's house. Indeed, so intent was he upon the felicitous thought that—with a strange self-delusion—he avowed to his wife, delighted by her husband's wit and courage, that he flung the words—hard and hot like a thunderbolt—"in Jericho's face." And the elevated tailor almost thought as much. Nevertheless, for Jericho's face, truth meekly supplies Jericho's knocker.

The waistcoat that six weeks ago had wrapt Jericho, lay on the ground. How wide and large it looked! An expanded cere-cloth of perished flesh! How much of him—of him, Jericho—was once in that waistcoat that was now—where? It could not be possible that the bank in his bosom was supplied at the cost of his fleshly substance? He was not paying himself away transmuted into paper? Pooh! Nonsense! He never felt better; never felt so hard and firm. Nevertheless, he looked upon the waistcoat as upon an opened book, written with mortal meanings. And then again he felt assured his fleshy store did *not* supply his money, and then—he determined to measure his waist, and in exactest balance—unknown to all men—to weigh himself every morning. The first part of the discipline he would immediately commence. Whereupon, with a silken lace he encompassed his chest, snipping close where both ends joined. Scarcely had he finished the operation, when light, yet peremptory fingers, tapped at the door. "May I come in, love?" It was the voice of Mrs. Jericho.

"Certainly," said Jericho; "what do you want, Sabilla, my dear?"

Let us endeavour to explain this mutual familiarity. The truth is, in a very soft moment Jericho had murmured to his wife this honey-sweet intelligence—He knew no bounds to his wealth! Whereupon, with a responsive burst of sympathy, Mrs. Jericho declared that, in such case, she saw no end to his greatness. We have said that Mrs. Jericho was a woman of great imagination. Instantaneously she beheld herself upon the topmost peak of the Mountains of Millions; whose altitude is just ten thousand thousand times higher than the Mountains of the Moon. So high that the biggest pearls in the very oldest coronets appeared to Mrs. Jericho no bigger than mustard-seed. With boundless riches she instantly felt boundless ambition. Mrs. Jericho had ever made her best curtsey to the power of wealth: but with the unexpected Plutus as her guest, she was suddenly rapt, sublimated. The Lady Macbeth of a money-box.

"Solomon,"—never until his day of riches had even his own wife called him Solomon—"make haste: you are wanted. Somethink very particular—a great proposal—vital to us—all we could wish."

"Who is it, my dear? What's it about?" asked Jericho with dull composure.

"I have already told you,"—said Mrs. Jericho in a deep organ note—"that you may fill the world. You *shall* fill it." Jericho rubbed his chin; then—he could not help it—looked askance upon the all-wide, cast-off waistcoat. "Make haste, and meet me in the drawing-room." Saying this, Mrs. Jericho, in all her natural pomp, departed.

Whilst Jericho finishes his toilette, making really the most of himself, let us proceed to the drawing-room. Miss Agatha Pennibacker never looked prettier: she is neatly, gracefully attired in morning muslin web; and stands for the moment looking down with full eyes upon the cup of a flower, into which, with pouting lips, she idly blows. And who could think that that little flower should reflect such a rosy flush upon the face of Agatha? Perhaps, however, it is not all the flower: it may be, that the presence of Sir Arthur Hodmadod, who stands some way apart, half twirling a chair in the hollow of one hand, and with a smile showing all his fine teeth to the simple Agatha,—perhaps, the baronet has at least a share of the blush with the scarlet anemone.

"I am delighted to hear, my dear madam, that you suffered no fatigue—took no cold," very tenderly observes the baronet—"beauty is a jewel—when I say a jewel, of course I mean a flower—that sometimes suffers from the night."

"But, Sir Arthur—it was so fine, you recollect! Do you not remember the brilliancy of the moon that, you observed, looked like a new nun that had just taken the veil; and surely—*can* you forget"—asks the emphatic Agatha—"the beautiful compliment you paid to the stars?"

"I assure you, now, that's just like me—I do," replies the modest man. "Haven't a notion."

"Oh, you said—I recollect it so well," says the earnest creature, raising her liquid eyes—"you said that the stars were the diamonds of the poor."

"That's very like me: but I am so liable to forget. Still, I should have sworn to the thought anywhere."

Thus may man commit unconscious perjury. For, be it at once known that it was Candituft who, in his large benevolence, gave the stars to the poor man for his jewels: a sort of liberality Candituft was very prone to, for it in no way impoverished himself.

"You are aware, dear madam," said Sir Arthur, a little abruptly, "that in the days of chivalry, it was the custom for ladies to be leeches. You know, when I say leeches, I don't of course mean the nasty things in ponds, but surgeons. Then every lady-love dressed her own knight. Of course, I mean his wound."

"To be sure; I've read it all very often. Yes"—and Agatha looked suddenly devoted—"in those dear olden times women fulfilled their mission, and were leeches. We shall never see those days again!"

"Suppose we try," said Hodmadod, handing a chair to Agatha, dropping into one himself, and drawing close to the fluttered young lady, whose timid eye now and then turned to the door. "What do you think of that hand, dearest Miss Agatha?" and Sir Arthur gracefully presented his open palm.

"Oh! gracious!" cried the young lady, flinging away the anemone, clasping her hands, and looking piteous sorrow. Wherefore? The hand had been blistered; and a little wound —Miss Agatha might have covered it with a guinea, if she had had the coin and the thought about her—lay in the palm.

"Your candid opinion, sweet girl? In its present wounded state—when I say wounded, of course I mean it's quite as good as ever—I couldn't offer the hand to a lady?"

"Dear me!" cried Agatha, "what a question! How should I know? But how did it happen?"

"Why, you see, not used to the sort of thing, it was the hay-fork; when I say a hay-fork, I think I may venture to observe"—and here the handsome baronet looked in the glowing face of Agatha, and smiled with all his might—"the dart of Cupid."

"Dear me!" and Agatha looked at the hurt, with evidently no thought of the figurative weapon that had caused it—"dear me! it must give you dreadful pain."

"Dreadful! that is, of course, great pleasure. Now, dear young lady, I want you to be my leech."

"La! Sir Arthur; we don't live in such times, you know;" and Agatha was delighted.

"As I am determined to offer this hand with all my heart in it—when I say all my heart, I mean my title—to a young lady whom you know, and, I believe, very much respect—as upon that resolution I am a perfect rock—when I say a rock, I mean I am hard upon being happy—why then"——

"I see exactly what you mean, Sir Arthur," said Agatha, to the rescue.

"That's delightful! That's a true woman who, when a man has only half a meaning, supplies the other half. It's that that makes the full circle of the wedding-ring. When I say the wedding-ring, of course I mean"—

"I know," cried Agatha, quickly.

"Well, dear Miss Pennibacker, will you undertake the cure, for the lady you are best acquainted with?"

"I'm sure I—I'd do anything in such a case to serve any lady. But hadn't I better call mamma? She's a beautiful surgeon! Oh, what a leech she'd have been in those sweet old times. Yes, I'd better call mamma;" and, like a startled antelope, the maiden bounded from the room.

Sir Arthur Hodmadod, left to himself, incontinently walked up to a mirror. It was, at the worst, his old resource. To him a looking-glass was capital company. It always brought before him the subject he loved best: a subject he never grew tired of; a subject that, contemplate it as he would, like every other truly great work, revealed some hitherto undiscovered excellence. Thus, in a very few seconds, Sir Arthur was so intently fixed upon the well-known, yet ever new production before him; was so profoundly satisfied with the many merits appealing to his impartial judgment, that he heard not the door open; heard not the soft footsteps of two ladies.—Sir Arthur, in the intensity of his study, was wholly unconscious of the approach of Miss Monica Pennibacker and her very recent, and very fast friend, Miss Candituft. Monica was about to break in upon the grateful meditation of the baronet, when Miss Candituft raised her eloquent forefinger. This gesture was followed by nods and smiles; and Monica, with sudden knowledge of their mysterious import, jerked her head, and laughed in answer; and without a word, but with a huge enjoyment of the jest, quitted the ground.

Sir Arthur is still at the glass, and Miss Candituft sinks upon a sofa. The cold, calm face of the lady very nearly approached the face of the gentleman in the mirror; nevertheless, so fixed was he upon his subject, that the intrusion failed to rouse him. Miss Candituft caught the reflected features of the baronet; and though she felt all the force of their vacancy; though she thought she despised that handsome mask of man more than ever; she felt stir within her remorseless thoughts of vengeance. In that stern moment she fixed the baronet's fate. He, poor victim! with all his soul on tiptoe walking the outline of his right whisker, he knew not what awaited him.—He knew not that behind him, sat a weak woman who had determined to snatch him from himself; to carry him away, whether he would or not; to hurry him to a venerable edifice; and then and there rivet on him a chain for life. And this, it is our faith, is a sentence often passed in silence on the unsuspecting sufferer; a sentence pronounced in self-confidence in play-house boxes, in ball-room corners; possibly even in cathedral pews. The judge all outward smiles and tenderness, has thoughts of a life-long sentence at heart. How beautiful that it should be so! To our imagination how much more delicious the simple, balmy flower, when we know that it smiles so sweetly, and to all appearance so unconsciously of the wedding-ring gold, so very deep below.

"Well, I do look well—devilish well to-day," said Sir Arthur to the baronet in the glass. "I don't think I ever saw myself look better. Handsome—when I say handsome, I mean quite a butcher. Miss Candituft!" cried Sir Arthur, suddenly startled by the vision.

"I didn't speak! I didn't say a word—did I?" cried Hodmadod. "I don't think I spoke. Eh?"

"Not a word," answered the lady; "not a syllable; it was only 'the mind, the music breathing from the face.' What a shame it is you should be so handsome, Sir Arthur. Really, you go in great danger. You'll be carried off by some band of desperate women, and afterwards raffled for; you'll be married some day in spite of your screams. By the way, Sir Arthur,"—and Caroline fixed the baronet with her cold, full look—"What brings *you* here?"

"Oh, friendship. That is, when I say friendship, I"—

"Yes; the old meaning. Well, you always had an admirable taste, Sir Arthur. I must say that; an admirable taste, even before your looking-glass. Dear me!"—and she suddenly rose and crossed to the window—"quite a garden here. Well, I have often wondered what fools flowers were, to grow in London: I mean—but Sir Arthur, of course, you know what I mean." And saying this, Miss Candituft stept upon the verandah; and for a time, there is no doubt of it, divided her admiration between flowers and music; the geraniums about her, and a barrel-organ below her.

The next minute, and Agatha returned with even a deeper flush in her face—with a more vivacious sparkle in her eye—with a quicker tremor in her voice. To be made love to by a baronet! For the suspicion had, during her long absence, strengthened into assurance. Great had been her growth of heart, large her addition of knowledge, in the few minutes employed to pass to her room, and to bring together every kind of imaginable anodyne; every sort of balsamic remedy.

"My dear Miss Agatha," cried Hodmadod pretty loudly, that Miss Candituft might have the fullest benefit of his intonation; "my dear lady, I blush for this trouble: when I say, I blush I—I really don't know what to say."

"Don't name it, Sir Arthur. I couldn't disturb mamma; still I—I wish I had, for upon my word and honour, I don't know what to do. Oh dear! it is very bad," and again Agatha glanced at the baronet's abraded hand.

"Dear me! This is the thing—the very thing," and Hodmadod took up a card of court-plaister; a healing substance so very rare, and requiring such nice wisdom to prescribe it, that of course the baronet had never thought of the remedy until produced by the anxious maid before him.

"Well, Sir Arthur, I thought that possibly might do: dear me! why didn't you think of it before? What you must have suffered!" said Agatha with thoughts of pain distressing her pretty face.

"The fact is, I had the misfortune, that is the delight to receive the wound"—Miss Candituft unconsciously tore a camellia to bits as she listened—"in the most beautiful society; and in that society I said to myself, it shall be healed. When I say healed"—

"It will be quite well to-morrow," said Agatha very earnestly; and now she cast an eye at the wound, measuring its smallness, and with a pair of scissors cut the plaister to the diameter of the hurt. When she had delicately rounded a piece the size of a shilling; trimming and trimming it as though it was to her impossible to make too nice an adjustment; she gently laid it on the fingers of the baronet, at the same time, with the prettiest grace and humility, dropping a curtsey.

Sir Arthur Hodmadod looked smilingly at Agatha, and then at the round black patch lying on his fingers.—"My dear madam, you must breathe upon it."

"Oh dear no! Not at all! Certainly not," cried Agatha.

Sir Arthur, holding the little patch by the extreme edges of his finger and thumb-nail, presented it to the lips of Agatha. "Breathe, my dear madam; when I say breathe, I mean waft a—a—"

"I couldn't think of such a thing," cried Agatha, retreating.

"The whole charm—the spell—when I say the charm, I mean the medicine—is in the breath that warms it. My dear Agatha," and Sir Arthur attempted to encircle the timid creature's waist.

"How very foolish!" cried Agatha, still shrinking. "How very foolish!" And then she made her little mouth into the smallest bud, and blew quickly twice or thrice. "How very foolish!"

"Now, I may call the cure almost complete," said Sir Arthur, and he placed the patch upon the wound. "Upon my life! Beautiful! Delicious!" and he cast his eyes rapturously towards the ceiling.

"Has it done you so much good already, Sir Arthur? I'm so glad! Such a simple thing, too."

"My dearest girl, it is the delightful magic of your breath. I feel it—from this little patch, it goes through and through all my blood. I'm drinking champagne all over," cried the impassioned patient.

"La! Sir Arthur, how can you?" cried Agatha.

"When I say champagne, I mean nectar's nothing to it. What a beautiful surgeon!" and Sir Arthur took Agatha's hand, and pressed it in his wounded palm, pressing the patch to make the operation perfect. "Dear me!" and the gentleman feigned sudden surprise, "that I should be near forgetting it!"

"Forgetting what, Sir Arthur?" asked the ingenuous maid.

"The fee, sweet girl; the fee," and Sir Arthur, quite ere the young lady was aware of his intention, pressed his lips to her hand—to the hand that was rapidly snatched away as from the touch of a nettle. "And now, my dear little leech—when I say leech, I mean my blooming cherub—when do you think the hand will be fit to go to church?"

"I should say, Sir Arthur, that the lady herself, whoever she may be, could best answer such a strange question." Here Agatha tried to trill a careless note or two.

Sir Arthur very much enjoyed the pretty confusion of Agatha, and was highly delighted by the torment that, in the courage new to himself, he had, he was sure of it, inflicted upon Miss Candituft. It was really capital recreation, excellent sport, at one and the same time to play with the hearts of two women. And one such a pretty little simpleton—the other such a high-topping task-mistress! The baronet felt proud of himself. And then he thought of his face, his figure; and took the incident as a matter of course. How could it be otherwise?

"You can't predict the time?" and Sir Arthur gaily returned to the question.

"Haven't an idea," said Agatha; "no, not an idea."

"At all events, then, you will see the patient every day?" Whereupon the baronet would look as though he had all his heart in his eyes.

"Why, really, Sir Arthur, upon such a subject I feel—I mean—you must ask my mamma. Ha!"—and Agatha snatched her hand away, for the door opened, and Mrs. Jericho, most sumptuously caparisoned, flowed into the room—"And here is mamma," said the confused maiden.

Mrs. Jericho had a mother's eyes, and would not then and there see the blushes of her daughter. As though Agatha had not been in the room, Mrs. Jericho, all smiles and presence of mind, received and returned the compliments of the baronet.

"Agatha, my child," observed Mrs. Jericho in the softest voice, "I thought the Hon. Mr. Candituft"—

"Oh, Cesar is talking to Monica," said Miss Candituft, stepping from the balcony, whilst Agatha felt it was impossible that she could do otherwise than faint to behold her. "Really you have a charming prospect from this window. I've been quite fixed by it—quite. Did not expect to see anything like what I have seen," said Miss Candituft; and Agatha shuddered. The next moment Monica joined the party, informing her mamma that the Hon. Mr. Candituft had been removed into the study by Mr. Jericho. Thither let us follow them.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Candituft still grasps the hand of his excellent new friend. "Upon my honour, my dear sir, the sight of you looking so well lifts a mountain from my mind. I wouldn't have had the feelings of Dr. Mizzlemist for the honours of the earth." Mr. Jericho feebly smiles, lifting his shoulders in deprecation of further sympathy. "Surely this—this is the hand the fork went through, yet not so much as a scar."

"It was nothing: I'm happily formed, Mr. Candituft; that is, my flesh heals directly. It all arises from a wonderful purity of blood no doubt, but nothing hurts me," said Jericho, "nothing."

"A common person, Mr. Jericho—now the danger's past I don't mind saying it—a common man from such a wound must have had lockjaw." Here Candituft put his hand before his eyes, to shut out the horror of the picture. Recovering himself, he proceeded, with a gay, playful look—"And lockjaw, Mr. Jericho, would not have served your turn in the House of Commons."

"My good sir," answered Jericho, with an air of instruction, "I am not in the House of Commons."

"Not taken the oaths and seat, certainly, but 'tis good as done.

My dear sir, you are reserved for great things: the whole brotherhood of man will one day feel disposed to bless you. And, my dear sir, permit me to congratulate you on your heroic helpmate, Mrs. Jericho."

"She's a—a fine woman," said Jericho: he could say no less.

"A woman of far-seeing ambition. She already beholds you on the top of the tree, sir; on the top of the tree," and Candituft shook Jericho's hand till he shook him into smiles.

"Why, sir, I am not backward—goodness forbid!—not backward to acknowledge the responsibility. Money is the support of the world: the pillar of the social edifice. Without money, man is little above the brute."

"A great political truth," cried the astonished Candituft, "a very great political truth."

"Let us look through the animal world, Mr. Candituft. What makes the elephant powerful?—his trunk and tusks. What makes the lion dangerous?—his teeth and claws. And, what tusks and teeth are to the lower creatures, money is to man. Is it not so?" asked Jericho, confidently.

Candituft suddenly folded his arms, and looking downward, as though speaking to the carpet, said very vehemently—"It is."

"I think," continued Jericho, "I think it is the great Lord Bacon who somewhere observes—'Knowledge, turned into ready money, is power.' I am of his lordship's opinion."

"Of course, Mr. Jericho. It was to be expected of you. And now, my dear, dear sir, to business. Mrs. Jericho informed me, at Jogtrot Lodge, that you burn to get into Parliament. You are right. *That* is your sphere."

"I don't think I could make a speech—don't think I could say a dozen words," urged the modest Jericho, "unless, I had the decanters before me."

"We don't look for long speeches from men of wealth, sir. We've plenty of speakers whose only bank is the English language; and tremendously they draw upon it. What we want—what we can't have too much of—is the substantial, unmistakeable power of property. When a man rises with a million of money in his pocket, people think it's his wealth that talks and not he. Therefore, boggle as he may, he is sure to say something worth listening to. The world is charitable, sir, and tolerates the man for the metal."

"Of course; very right. I don't know," said Jericho, reassured, "that I ought to fear Parliament—much."

"Fear! Your party would embrace you! You'd be the pet of the—by the way, what are your politics?" asked Candituft.

"The politics of—of the human heart," answered Jericho, "of course, nothing less."

"I thought so: our side! My dear sir, you will find it will be impossible for us to make too much of you. And now to the question that has brought me here. The borough of Toadsham is at your service. You needn't even show yourself; all you have to say is—yes; and take your seat. You can't imagine how your dear, your noble wife has jumped at the notion."

"Well, 'yes' is soon said," observed Jericho.

"And you'll say it? I knew you would," and Candituft shook Jericho by the hand. "Ha, sir! what a career is open to you. With your boundless wealth"—

"Pooh! pooh; no such thing, Mr. Candituft. What could have put it into your head?"

"With your boundless wealth, sir, after serving your country with your patriotic votes in the Commons, you'll be gathered to the House of Lords in your green old age. Think of that, sir. In your very green old age. Rank, title, honours! Why, who shall say that the little ermine destined to trim your robe, is not at this minute playing somewhere in the Ural Mountains? Who shall say that the silk-worms that shall spin the silk for your blue riband, are not at this moment in the egg?"

Jericho thought he felt his heart warm with the fancy. He flattered himself that the organ absolutely fluttered. He observed—"What will be the price—the lowest price of Toadsham?"

"Not more than ten thousand," answered Candituft, very blithely.

"That is a large sum, Mr. Candituft," cried Jericho.

"Well, now, you do surprise me! I cannot disguise it; you do astonish me. I did think you'd wonder at the cheapness. Ten thousand pounds for a seat in Parliament! After all—with your enlarged views—what is it but so much money put out to the interest of your country and yourself? You must recollect, sir, we live in revolutionary times. Now, there is such a cry for purity of election, as it's called, that the selling price—when a pennyworth is to be had—*must* go up. It's in the nature of human things, Mr. Jericho. In its time, sir, I give you my honour, Toadsham has brought double the money. Double the money, sir," averred Candituft.

"When can the business be arranged? When can I go in?" asked Jericho.

"When the usual forms are over—and in your case, they are only forms—directly, my dear sir."

"Well, as it will please my wife, and—as you observe, Mr.

Candituft—property ought to prop the nation, I don't think I shall refuse. No: you may book me for Toadsham."

At this moment Mrs. Jericho entered the room. "Permit me, madam, to congratulate you on the admirable resolution of Mr. Jericho. He has consented"—said Candituft, as though relieved of great anxiety—"he has consented to stand by the country. He will sit for Toadsham."

"Of course, my dear sir. These are not times"—said Mrs. Jericho—"for property to desert its post. No, sir, we must stand by our institutions. Ar'n't they beautiful, my dear Solomon?"

"The pride of surrounding nations" answered Jericho, without moving an eyelid.

"A fiddlestick! I mean the diamonds," and Mrs. Jericho exhibited a magnificent suite of jewels.

"They look very bright," said Jericho.

"Bright my dear! Why, as Miss Candituft observed, they are positively scintillations of the sun. Bright! Why"—and Mrs. Jericho waved the jewels to and fro—"there's no looking at them."

"What will be the use of wearing 'em, then?" asked the apathetic Jericho.

"My dear, how very literal you are. Why, I thought you'd be delighted to see them," said Mrs. Jericho.

"I am; very much delighted," and Jericho looked at the gems with as much light in his eye as would have been reflected therein from so many pewter buttons. "Very fine; whose are they?"

"Whose are they?" cried Mrs. Jericho. "What a question! Why, whose should they be?"

"I'm the worst of all men at a riddle," said Jericho. "I can't guess."

"Why, Mr. Jericho, they are your wife's—of course," cried the majestic owner, with proud emphasis.

"How did you get 'em?" inquired the frigid husband.

"What a question to ask a woman in London! My dear Jericho—ha! ha!—why, my good man, what is the matter with you? I thought you'd be delighted with my taste. Any other man would be proud of his wife, with such a choice. Eh, Mr. Candituft?"

"And so is Mr. Jericho. Only he's a philosopher; he won't show the rapture that swells his heart." No winter-tortoise ever slept sounder in its shell, than did the heart of Jericho in his bosom.

"You know, my dear,"—said Mrs. Jericho, in her sweetest, most convincing voice—"you know 'twould be impossible to go to court without diamonds. One isn't drest without diamonds."

"Court!" Jericho opened his eyes; and a wan smile broke on his thin, blank cheek. "Are you going to court?"

"Why, of course. Are we not, dear Mr. Candituft?" The Man-Tamer placed his hand upon his heart, and smiled assent. "What would be thought of us, if we did not pay our homage to"—

"To be sure; very right: I shall only be too happy," said Jericho; "it's expected of us, no doubt."

"And 'twill not be my fault, my dear, if we do not go like ourselves. The dear girls are quite delighted with their pearls"—

"Pearls!" groaned Jericho.

"Pearls," repeated Mrs. Jericho very vivaciously—"quite delighted and"—

The sentence was broken by the sudden appearance of Monica and Agatha, each bearing a jewel-case; and looking radiant with the possession.

"Thank you, dear papa," said Monica, curtseying and smiling her best to Jericho.

"They're beautiful! Thank you—dear, dearest papa"—cried the more impulsive Agatha, and—thoughtless of the presence of Candituft—she threw her arms about Jericho's neck.

"And the pair of you have pearls, eh?" asked Jericho, very hopelessly.

"Look," said Monica, and she exhibited her treasure.

"Look," cried Agatha, and she half-dropt upon one knee, on the other side, to show *her* jewels.

"Beautiful!" cried Candituft. "Pray ladies, don't stir."—The girls, with pretty wonder in their faces, kept their positions on either side of Jericho. "My dear madam"—and Candituft appealed to Mrs. Jericho—"Is not this a delightful group? An exquisite family picture? It ought to be painted. On either side beauty lustrous with thankfulness, and for the centre figure, benevolence unconscious of its worth. Positively it must go to the Academy."

"Milton and his Daughters quite common-place to it," averred Miss Candituft, joining the party: for the interesting group above had been suddenly scattered by the arrival of the jeweller. Hence, Sir Arthur Hodmadod shortly afterwards edged himself into the circle, contributing his admiration in his own nervous style. Ere, however, his praises could call forth a response there was an addition to the party in the flushed and hurried person of Basil Pennibacker.

"Beg your pardon. Like a cannon-ball, you see, bring my own apology with me," cried Basil.

"My dear child," said Mrs. Jericho. "What is the matter? Why are you always in such a hurry?"

"Credit's long, ma'am, life is short, as the latin tailor says," and Basil bowed to the guests.

"Look at mamma's diamonds and our pearls," cried Agatha.

"Why, my honoured madam, you are not going to wear these diamonds? You are? When?" cried Basil.

"Oh, at the drawing-room, on Thursday," said Mrs. Jericho.

"Well, then, my revered lady, let me embrace you; I shall never see you again. Never," said the despairing son.

"What do you mean, you foolish boy?" and the fond mother smiled at her child, and shook her head.

"You'll be carried off, ma'am, stolen beyond the hope of all Hue-and-Cry. You must go to St. James's with two policemen in your carriage; two with blunderbusses, or the property's lost. Eh? What's here?"—and Basil looked at the treasures of his sisters. "Pearls, eh? Why, what a lot!—there's the lining of a hundred beds of oysters."

"Basil, how can you!" cried Agatha.

"Cost a pretty penny, eh? Take the oysters at eight-pence a dozen, and say two dozen subscribe one pearl, how much will the pair of you be worth, when you're both drest? Eh, sir! That's a nice bit of arithmetic," said Basil, turning to Jericho. "How much, sir?"

"I don't know, young man"—said Jericho with dignity. "What is more—I don't want to know."

"No, sir; but it's odd how folks will force disagreeable knowledge upon us; crab-apples, sir, that we must eat, and defy the stomach-ache."

"Basil!" exclaimed Mrs. Jericho, in her very deepest voice.

"I suppose," said the unchecked Basil, "you've not heard—no, I'm sure you haven't, by the holiday looks of you all. I'm certain, Mr. Candituft, you've heard nothing disagreeable, otherwise you'd have been alarming to look at."

"Dear Mr. Pennibacker,"—and Candituft clasped his hands, "what *has* happened?"

"Ha! you've something like a heart, you have; so fresh, and so full now. Some people's hearts are shrunk in them like dried nuts. 'Pon my life, you can hear 'em rattle as they walk."

"Mr. Pennibacker!" said Jericho, solemnly.

"Sir!" said Basil, folding his arms, and drawing himself up.

"You will keep these similes for your associates. There are ladies and gentlemen here," said Jericho.

"Very good, sir; I'm easy of belief; wasn't made for a martyr. No, sir," said Basil, "warranted not to burn."

"My dear Basil, for all this levity," said Mrs. Jericho, "I can see there's something wrong. What is it?"

"Well then, here it is." Basil cleared his throat, yet his eyes moistened, and his mouth twitched as he spoke. "Well then, to begin; your friend Carraways is ruined."

"Ruined!" echoed all.

"That fine old man—that noble gentleman—that capital chap crowned in his cradle the king of good fellows—that man that was as free of the loyalty as the skies are free of rain—well, he's ruined! A blank—*£. s. d.* scratched clean out of him—in one word, the vital spark of money has left him, and in the city he's worse than a dead man."

"Poor fellow! Poor—dear—fellow!" said Candituft grieved, but very placid.

"It's quite impossible!" cried Mrs. Jericho; "so sudden! How could it have happened?"

"Easily enough. House gone in India. Nothing safe there. For my part, I hardly believe in India at all. I think India's a magnificent illusion, like a grand sunset. Somehow or the other every fortune in India has an earthquake wrapt up in it. Any way, Carraways is swallowed;" and Basil bit his lip.

"Well, I am sorry," said Miss Candituft. "I must say I am very sorry."

"Very good of you, madam. And of you too, sir;" and Basil looked gloomily in the unconcerned countenance of Candituft. "I'm sure your heart is broken. I can see the pieces in your face."

"The fact is, dear sir," said Candituft, and he spoke truly, "I was a little prepared for the intelligence. Still I feel deeply for my friend."

"And poor Mrs. Carraways! Poor dear soul! What will she do? I feel for her," said Mrs. Jericho.

"And sweet Bessy! It will be a dreadful blow! Such a gentle creature," said Monica, glancing at her pearls.

"Why, she can't come to positive want, you know," said Hodmadod; and then, looking about him in his wise way, he added—"I don't think she'll come to want, do you? She's accomplished, you know, and when I say accomplished"—

"I know," said Basil bitterly, his eye flashing. "I know; turn governess — an upper housemaid, with privilege to go without caps. Teach children to gargle their little throats with the gamut. Of course, she can't starve. But I beg your pardon, Mr. Candituft; people did say you were in love with Bessy."

"I always admired Miss Carraways, but love—never, sir, never," said Candituft with solemn emphasis ; and Monica again looked at her pearls, and serenely smiled.

"Well, I only wish she'd have me," said Basil. "I never did think I should go the way of most flesh—but as matters have turned out, I'd marry Bessy myself."

Mr. Jericho rose with great dignity from his seat. He looked about him, as though bespeaking all attention for the coming utterance. When he deemed the company sufficiently toned down to appreciate the value of his words, he looked sternly at Basil, and said—"I cannot consent to remain in the room and listen to such folly—such headlong folly." With this, our Man made of Money majestically retired.

"Better not drive me desperate," said the youth ; "better not, or I'll marry her, and—to get a bit of honest bread—disgrace the family. Shouldn't at all mind sweeping a crossing in diamond studs, mahogany stick and lavender broom. Elegance in distress. Must melt a discerning public. Ha ! ha !" and the young man laughed very savagely.

"Basil, I must say it—your conduct is most extravagant," cried Mrs. Jericho. "Marry, indeed !"

"Why not ? As Bessy can make satin pincushions, and I can sell 'em, my wife will serve the family cheap, my dear lady, if only for old acquaintance. Ha ! ha !"

"Don't be foolish, Basil. For my own part," said Mrs. Jericho, "I would make any sacrifice for the poor things."

"And so would I, mamma," said Monica.

"And gracious goodness knows," cried Agatha, "so would I."

"And you mean it ? Well, I begin to be proud of you," said Basil. "And it isn't friendship made easy ? Oh, no ; certainly not. Capital little girls you are ! Let us have a good stare at these sons of oysters," and Basil took the pearls from his sisters ; whilst Mrs. Jericho with important looks moved silently from the room. "I suppose"—and Basil waved the jewels in the light—"I suppose they're warranted real natives ?"

"What do you mean, Basil ?" cried Monica.

"Beautiful jewels," and Basil still admired the pearls. "But what a jewel is true friendship, eh ? Nothing like that jewel for the time-piece of life to go upon : is there, Sir Arthur ?"

"Certainly not," answered the baronet. "When I say certainly not, I mean—it's quite a matter of opinion."

"How very handsome you'll look with these upon you ! 'Pon my word, girls, they'll think you're mermaids come to court ; come, with the family pearls from the Indian seas. They *will*," cried Basil, earnestly. "You'll look beautiful with them ; but, if you'll take my advice, much more lovely without 'em."

"Without 'em ! Go to court without jewels ! Foolish boy ! What would you have us wear ?" asked Monica.

"Friendship, my pretty one. It is such a jewel, and I'll tell you how you may best display it."

Whilst Basil describes to impatient ears a very uninteresting operation, we will follow Mrs. Jericho. She has just entered Mr. Jericho's study. "My dear," she observes, "you must let me have some money."

Mr. Jericho did not rouse himself at the sound. He sat in his arm-chair, pale and thin, and melancholy.

"What is the matter, Solomon ? Surely you are not ill ?" said Mrs. Jericho.

"Certainly not ; do I look ill ?" asked the Man of Money.

"Why,—no. Nevertheless, my dear, you don't seem to have that zest for life that—with such a prospect opening upon us—you ought to have. In a few weeks you're in Parliament : a peerage must follow in proper time : we can command that. Our money must make us one of the bulwarks of the constitution. Why, you don't attend to me, my love : one of the bulwarks," repeated Mrs. Jericho.

"To be sure ; of course," said the listless peer in embryo.

"And now"—said Mrs. Jericho, in her most cordial manner—"now, let me have a thousand pounds."

"A thousand pounds ! What for ?" cried Jericho.

"To pay the jeweller. The man—I'm determined never to lay out another shilling at the house—the man has orders not to leave the jewels without the money. He little knows whom he insults," said Mrs. Jericho ; twisting her neck to strangle her indignation.

"He won't leave the jewels without the money ?" said Jericho. "Then let him take them back—we won't have 'em."

"Why," answered the wife, "'twould be only what the fellow deserves ; but the truth is, I'm very much taken with them. Besides, to reject them we—we might be misunderstood."

Jericho had, in truth, no mind to lay out a thousand pounds. A terrible suspicion of the nature of his money made him pause. He would therefore turn to his own account the caution of the tradesman. "I'll not be insulted, Mrs. Jericho. The man has refused to leave the goods without the money ; very well—let him take them back."

"Mamma !" cried the weeping Monica, running into the room.

"Dear mamma !" sobbed Agatha, following in larger grief.

"Why, what's the matter? Tears! What can have happened?" asked their mother.

"Is the parrot dead?" was the cold query of Jericho.

"That Basil has run away with my pearls," cried Monica.

"And mine!" sobbed Agatha.

"Put them in his pocket in the most shameful manner, and said he'd turn them into—into—" Monica could get no farther for her tears; whereupon Agatha vigorously wiped her eyes, checked her sorrow, and indignantly continued—

"Into friendship for Bessy Carraways. Because we said we'd show our friendship in any way, he told us a fine story about a better—better—better jewel—and—and—and pearls in his pocket—gone away," sobbed Agatha, incapable of unbroken speech.

Mrs. Jericho knitted her brow in deep black lines; then smiled and said—"'Tis only Basil's jest; but certainly a very foolish one. Now, Mr. Jericho, the money must be paid; we have not the jewels to return. Now, we have no other alternative." Jericho groaned. "I will send the man to you."

"When I ring the bell," said the haggard Jericho.

"Come, girls, 'tis only Basil's frolic, but certainly a very—very foolish one." And Mrs. Jericho, with an arm about the neck of either daughter, led her weeping offspring from the room.

"The thousand pounds must be paid," thought Jericho. "They shall be paid; and at once I'll be resolved." A few minutes the Man made of Money sat in a maze of thought: he then drew a thousand pounds—ten notes—from his mysterious bank; he rang the bell; the jeweller was shown in, and laid the receipt before his customer. Jericho, with offended dignity, cold and silent, pointed to the ten bank notes. The jeweller took them up—counted them. As they rustled, Jericho felt as though his heart was compressed within a cold iron hand.

"A thousand pounds—very much obliged to you, sir," said the jeweller, and took his leave.

For some minutes Jericho sat motionless—all but breathless. He would, however, know his fate. He took out the silk lace with which an hour ago he had measured his chest. Again he passed it round his body. He had drawn upon the bank, and he had shrunk an inch.

Truly he was a Man made of Money. Money was the principle of his being; for with every note he paid away a portion of his life.

CHAPTER IX.

In due season, Mr. Jericho—on the authority of his wife—was a pillar and an ark; a staff and a sword; a flambeau and a pair of scales; a buckler and a British lion. For, in the metaphoric mind of Mrs. Jericho, all these things were contained in a member of Parliament; even as a variety of spoons may be held in a single cherry-stone.

In addition to this, Mr. Jericho, on the like conjugal assurance, found himself to his passing pleasure, one of the trees of the constitution. He wanly smiled when he learned that, with his giant arms, he was to shelter the altar and the throne. He was a little flattered in his self-love when he heard that the weary would seek for comfort in his shadow, and the multitude feed with thankfulness upon his fruit.

As the cedar of Lebanon, without conscious effort of its own, represents the property of timber, so did Solomon Jericho represent the property of Parliament. And cedar and man—we have it upon the faith of Mrs. Jericho—are noble presences to contemplate. What—observed that intellectual woman—what would the little birds of the air, the robin-redbreasts, and all the family of finches, do—were there no cedars with hospitable boughs and twigs to house and roost them? And what would become of the poor and the weak, were there no Jerichos to protect and comfort them? Mr. Jericho was, doubtless, much delighted as he pondered the question.

It must be owned that the genius of money has a liking for fair play. Now and then, it takes pleasure in equity. If, at times, it brings trouble upon men, as men are too apt in their excess of sincerity to declare, it must be allowed that the trouble it saves them is to the full as great as the perplexity it inflicts. In the old poetic time the same fairy that would lead men astray for the sake of the mischief, would, by way of recompense, churn the butter and trim up the house, while the household snored. Now, money is the prose fairy of our mechanical generation. If now and then it leads simpletons into a Fleet Ditch; on the other hand, as deftly as ever imp or brownie laboured, it works even for the slumbering. Solomon Jericho, by the labouring means of ten thousand pounds, became member for Toadsham. He ate, drank, and slept; and, without sense of the great change working in him by workman money became a legislator. Even as the olden fairies churned butter, it may be, stamping the lumps with their own elfin impress; so had ten thousand ministers silently transformed Jericho into a legislator, stamping him with M.P. There is no such Puck as the Puck of the Mint.

Solomon had paid the money for his seat; every farthing of the sum had been deposited in the hand of the Hon. Cesar Candituft, who, whilst he was ever congratulating the country upon the acquired patriotism of Jericho, could not, much as he tried, be insensible of the shrunken and still shrinking anatomy of the new legislator. "'Tis anxiety, my dear madam; no doubt, anxiety," said Candituft, a little puzzled, to Mrs. Jericho.

"A nervous apprehensiveness," said the wife. "He thinks too much of the responsibility. I tell him 'tis nothing; am continually assuring him that, with his property, he may expect every indulgence; nevertheless, it is plain, dear sir, that the thoughts of Parliament wear him to a shadow. But he'll get the better of it: at least I hope—I must hope"—said the resigned woman—"that he'll get the better of it. Without such hope, I should be forlorn indeed. For I have other troubles, dear sir. That sweet, I mean, that foolish boy of mine"—

"A delightful study, madam; what I call a delicious study. It is so cheering, so sustaining, to contemplate the generosity of youthful emotions, when the ardent heart beats towards the entire human race: that is, to the whole family of man. Delightful!" and Candituft upturned his eyes.

Mrs. Jericho civilly acknowledged the general truth delivered by the philanthropist; nevertheless she felt a mother's anxiety, a mother's grief, that her boy Basil would select from the human family one particular individual as the depositary of an affection that, for a time at least, might be expended upon the world at large. Had matters remained as they were, the union of Basil and Bessy would have been at once natural and advantageous; but that Carraways should be turned into rags at the very time that Jericho was sublimated into money, rendered the idea of such a marriage quite preposterous. It was plain that Basil as the son of the wife of a man of boundless wealth, might marry whom he would; might, improving on the manner of the sultan, throw a wedding-ring at whomsoever he pleased. Therefore, to unite himself to the child of a pauper, was to fly in the face of fortune. It was wicked, presumptuous. Mrs. Jericho was not a superstitious woman; nevertheless, she could do no otherwise than tremble to think of it.

Some six weeks had passed since the festival at Jogtrot Lodge;

and Mr. and Mrs. Jericho, with the two young ladies seated in their barouche, again travelled the road. The Hon. Mr. Candituft and Sir Arthur Hodmadod, all grace and goodness, rode on either side of the carriage.

"My dear Jericho, I do think this is the most lovely country! Quite an Eden; is it not?" asked Mrs. Jericho; and the Man made of Money looked upon God's glorious work, as though he stared at so much whity-brown paper. "Quite a Paradise!" Jericho grunted. "Don't you recollect these beautiful swelling fields?"

"Like a green velvet bed," cried Hodmadod. "That is, when I say a bed, I mean to be sure a—a bed in Paradise; of course. All beds green there, Candituft? I think they're green, eh?"

"No doubt," said Candituft. "Green, with heartsease borders."

"You recollect these fields, eh, Solomon?" and Mrs. Jericho looked in her husband's eyes.

"To be sure; of course; green fields. One field's pretty well like another," answered the listless Jericho.

"And there, upon the hill; that noble clump of oaks?" said Mrs. Jericho. "Well, I do love oaks!"

"Wonderful trees, oaks," said Hodmadod. "Extraordinary. I tell you what happened to me."

"Oh *do*," said Agatha, gently closing her hands in attitude of meekest entreaty.

"Only last autumn I saw all the Channel Fleet. All with their sails set; all like so many clouds: when I say clouds, of course I mean canvas. Well, said I, this is wonderful. To think, said I—for it never struck me before—to think that all these three-deckers should come out of little acorns." Then the baronet paused a second; then rapidly asked, "They do come out of acorns, don't they?"

"Oh, undoubtedly," cried Agatha, with most assuring emphasis. "Most certainly."

Mrs. Jericho employed her thoughts solely upon the shifting beauties of the scene. "What a lovely mass of wood is that, rising up as it were to meet us as we mount the hill! Quite a retreat for Druids—don't you think so, dearest? That wood there," and Mrs. Jericho appealed to her husband.

"Hm!" said Jericho; "it must be damp—devilish damp. I'm very fond of woods—very; but it's when they're turned into comfortable houses."

"You hav'n't an eye for the picturesque, Mr. Jericho," said the hasty Hodmadod.

"Sir," cried Jericho; at the same time shutting his brow in such a deep, tight fold that had a fly been at the time upon his forehead, it must have been crushed to bits in the sudden wrinkle—"Sir!"

"When I say the picturesque, I mean you don't like houses in trees; that is, houses in the raw material? Houses without carpenters, you know? They *are* without carpenters,—eh?"

A very few weeks ago, and had Sir Arthur Hodmadod, Bart., dropt a single syllable to Jericho, he would have treasured it even as a syllable of the girl whose biggest words were the largest jewels. And now, in contemptuous silence, he looked upon the baronet with a grim, sharp face; keen, inexorable; the aspect of an axe. Possibly, the imaginative baronet regarded it as such; for he seemed irrepressibly to pass his hand round the back of his neck; at the same time urging on his steed, as though pricked by sudden peril.

"Why, my dear Jericho," said Sabilla, "what a love you had for the country."

"I've grown out of green food, madam; can't abide it," said Jericho.

"Never tell me, Solomon, I know you love it still. And how delicious, after your work in the Commons—how delicious when you can, to come to such a place as this. A place that must give you new strength, new ideas, new freshness," said Mrs. Jericho. "Every man with such an amount of national work must be the better for the country."

"It's like going to grass, you know," said Hodmadod, again dropping back.

"Quite," said Candituft. "The country is the natural abode of man. Nothing like the fruits of rustic thought. Give me an Act of Parliament that smells of the green earth."

"Delicious," said Hodmadod. "An Act of Parliament that smells like a nosegay. When I say a nosegay, of course I mean, smells of the landed interest. Nothing like the country for a statute. Without the country, you know, we should have no laws against poachers. Should we?" There was no spoken answer; none: but Agatha always eloquently replied, for she always smiled.

"Certainly the loveliest village, I ever saw," cried Mrs. Jericho as the carriage—according to orders—rolled slowly through a double line of cottages. "Delightful, is it not? The first time I saw it, I thought to myself,—well, here I could gather myself up to repose for life."

"Like a cat on a cushion," cried the too impulsive Hodmadod. Instantly, he felt his face shot clean through by the eyeballs of Mrs. Jericho. Whereupon he stammered,—"When I say a cat on a cushion, I mean of course a lady—a lady in her own house, you know."

"My dear Jericho," said the wife to the dullard made of money, "you don't seem to recollect where you are."

"Where?" asked Jericho, holding his cheek on edge. "Where?"

"Why, at Marigolds. Don't you remember those cottages, where the children stood, and where"—

Jericho growled, and no more. Possibly, he had the fullest recollection of the scene; and cared not to own it. Nevertheless, the place seemed blighted, changed. The two opposite schoolrooms where infant voices would answer voices, were empty, silent. There were knots of children playing at the doorways; here and there a straggler sprawling in the road: but the room of Schoolmaster White was tongueless; alike silent, and soon to be deserted, the school of widow Blanket. Squire Carraways, who had fed these little rills of learning, was a fountain dried up, and the rills had sunk with the source. A few of the folks of Marigolds looked from doors and peeped out at casements as the carriage ceremoniously rolled along the road; and there was an air, a look of curiosity in the people; but nothing frank, nothing hearty in their manner. The party must have felt that they entered the village as conquerors, rather than as future householders and patrons.

"Eh! Why, here we are at Jogtrot Hall," cried Jericho as the carriage rolled through the gates and wound up the sweep.

"Dear me, how dull everything looks!" said Mrs. Jericho, as she stept from the carriage. Dull indeed. The life of the Hall was gone—it seemed only the carcase of the house. All the furniture was removed; and vacancy stared through every window.

"Well, I don't know," said Hodmadod a little gravely. "Seems quite the ghost of bricks and mortar. Makes one low—very low. When I say low, I mean quite a woman. No; I don't mean that—I"—

"The emotion, my dear Sir Arthur," said Candituft, "does honour to your nature. There's hardly a piece of the house that doesn't seem to mourn the absence of the dear people who gave it warmth and life. I'm sure the family seem to come all about me; but—there is such a chill, such a loneliness—they come like ghosts."

"I didn't think," said Agatha, and two tears peeped into her eyes, "I didn't think there could be such a—a sort of feeling in an empty house. I'm sure there's something quite—quite religious about it."

"Miss Pennibacker!" cried Jericho, with a reprehensive frown, "Religious! For shame!"

"It seems to me, as if dear—dear Bessy"—cried Monica—"would glide into the room every moment."

"It is wonderful, Mr. Jericho"—said Candituft, as the party lounged on, and then paused, looking from the lawn into the dining-room—"it is wonderful, how the imagination will people space!"

Jericho rubbed his chin, and said—"Wonderful!"

"Ha, sir! what a family was here! There, sir, as perhaps you may recollect"—said Candituft,—"was the head of the table; there sat dear Mrs. Carraways; and there the master's chair. And there Bessy's place; she always sat beside the old man."

"Sweet girl!"—cried Hodmadod—"clung to him like a honeysuckle; when I say a honeysuckle, I mean of course, a—a devilish affectionate thing."

"Ha! Mr. Jericho," said Candituft, "I have passed many delightful dinners here, sir. I spent, I think—yes, I did—I spent last Christmas here. And—pray pardon me—it is impossible to think of that room unmoved. There sir, as I've said, was Mrs. Carraways; a kind, soft, beaming, hearty woman—plain to be sure, in her manners; in fact, very plain—but well meaning, poor soul! very well meaning, in spite of her bad French. And there was Carraways himself. A good man—I'm pretty sure, a good man; though perhaps a little sanguine: at least, they say so in the City. But when people have a tumble, the world always gives a good-natured reason for the slip. That, sir, I have remarked—always. There he sat, with his face lighted with the best of hearts, the best of wine, and the best of good spirits; his eyes swimming in jollity, and looking and talking as though he could have received all the brotherhood of man at his Christmas mahogany."

"Mr. Carraways was always very kind"—observed Mrs. Jericho,—"I don't think anybody can deny it."

"And there sat Bessy"—continued Candituft, warming as he went on—"there she sat; and though not a beauty—certainly, not a beauty—still, very well she looked. And next her was—I forget his name—but he was an amazingly rich person, and a very pleasant man. And there, opposite, was an Indian friend of Carraways—a Brahmin banker or something—very curious about English Christmas, I recollect; a man of most liberal sentiments — above national prejudice. Took mince-pie and burnt brandy in a manner that quite warmed one's heart.—Beside him I recollect was the last year's Lady Mayoress; very fine, very interesting woman; I well remember her; she never spoke a syllable. And on that side again, was a very—very distinguished traveller. He had hunted a unicorn somewhere, and was asked to a round of dinners to tell all about the sport.—And opposite to him was the rich"—

"You're not going to string off the whole set, are you?"—growled Jericho.

"A thousand pardons. I was carried away by the magic force of old associations. Still, I must say, it was a beautifully mixed party; that is, an equal share of wealth and wit. Poor, dear Carraways! He certainly did keep up Christmas. I believe there was absolutely a plum-pudding boiled, and put out cold for the robin-redbreasts."

"Poor little things," cried Hodmadod, "how they'll miss it!"

"Possibly not," said Mrs. Jericho with a proud look. "There may be others here, Sir Arthur, equally hospitable to robins."

"Yes, Sir Arthur," exclaimed Agatha. "Rather than they should go without, I'd make the pudding myself."

"Bravo! Beautiful!" cried Candituft. "Should you ever be lost in a wood, be sure of it, dear young lady—the robins will remember your goodness."

"Faugh!" said Jericho, at the same time looking a fierce rebuke at Candituft; who with the magic of his self-possession turned the censure into a jest. "Let us go in."

An old woman stood behind the opened door. An old, calm, sorrowful face looked timidly at the new-comers. Once or twice she sighed heavily; and then looked angrily, as though, in her way, resenting the ill-manners—as they seemed to her—of the visitors.

"You needn't follow us—we know the house well"—said Mrs. Jericho to the old dame.

"I know you do," said the old woman. "And so being, I hope you'll use it tenderly—poor thing."

"Tenderly! Why"—cried Monica—"the old woman talks as if the house was alive."

Mrs. Jericho raised her finger; forbidding any remark upon any probable meaning of such a person. And the old woman dropt herself upon a stair, and, heedless of hearers—as though she eased her heart with the utterance—she answered, while the tears ran down her face—"Alive! Ay, and it be alive, more alive than some flesh and blood. Dear! dear! dear! An' I've seen them folks look at the squire, as though it was bread and meat to 'em; and cosset and coax him, as if they could ha' put their necks under his shoe-leather: and now to stand afore the Hall—in the trouble it's in—and to grin and to make game—eh, dear! dear!—it's like laughing in the face of a corpse." And Widow Blanket—for it was the old village school-dame, removed from her seat of learning to dwell awhile in the Hall, before her final removal to the Poor-house—Widow Blanket sighed heavily; and as though to comfort her sorrow, seemed to fold it in her arms, and rock it to and fro.

The tread of the visitors—echoed loudly by the empty walls—sounded hollowly, heavily above. At the sound the old woman shivered a sigh, raised her eyes, and then continued to swing backwards and forwards, as though she would hear nothing more. Will the reader—for two or three minutes—mount the staircase?

"A very noble house," said Jericho, his eyes sweeping the reception-rooms.

"And what a lovely prospect," said Mrs. Jericho, approaching a window. "What an undulation of hill and meadow! What a prospect!"

"*This*, Mrs. Jericho," said the Monied Man, "is my prospect. *This* I can make my own; this is property: in its essence, I may say, property. But where's the property in what you call a lovely prospect; that any beggar may look at as well as I? Any vagabond tinker—or poet, or any ragamuffin of that sort—may pitch his tent, and boil his kettle, and smoke his pipe, and take his pleasure of the prospect, quite as if it was his own—upon lawful parchment, his own. This, I own it—this interferes with my righteous sense of property. What belongs to a man, belongs to him. If the sun goes down upon my property, I've a clear title to that sunset; if the clouds over my land are remarkably fine, they are my clouds; and it is a sort of moral larceny—though unhappily there's no law for it—but a moral larceny it is to all intents and purposes—for any beggar at his pleasure to enjoy what is over my land; to have—as the term is—the usufruct of that sunset—of those clouds."

Mr. Candituft pulled up to his face a look of strong conviction. "The question, my dear sir, in its whole breadth and depth, never struck me before. There is great primitive truth in what you say."

"A law could meet it," cried Hodmadod. "Couldn't a law meet it? At all events, if you can't secure the clouds and sunsets, of course the landlord has a clear right to all the thunder-bolts."

"Ass!" was at the lips of Mr. Jericho; but he swallowed the word, possibly to treasure it for another time. Stalking through the apartments, and looking about him, he flowed in speech; and Mrs. Jericho was too wise to stay the stream. "A very fine house—very fine ; but it wants a great deal—a very great deal done."

"How fortunate, Solomon ! " at length observed Mrs. Jericho. "Were it otherwise, there would be no opportunity for the development of your taste."

After a due examination of the upper house, the party descended the stairs, Dame Blanket slowly rising from her seat to make them way. "There is one room that is locked. Have you the key ? " asked Mrs. Jericho.

"That room be Miss Bessy's," said the old woman.

"Yes ; I know it, very well. You have the key ? " said the lady.

"Yes, ma'am," answered Dame Blanket, a little creakingly.

"Give it me," said Mrs. Jericho.

"No, ma'am," said Dame Blanket, straightening her back.

"Were you desired to retain that key ? " asked Monica, sharply.

"No, I warn't bid to keep it ; but I warn't bid to give it," cried the Dame, her voice rising. "And as it's as much one as t'other, I shall do one and not t'other."

"I call that logic in petticoats," said Candituft.

"I call it damned impertinence," cried Jericho—"whether in petticoats or in"—

"My dear Jericho," said his wife, with deprecating tenderness, "don't, love." Then, turning round to the dame. "Woman, give me the key ; I tell you, I know Miss Carraways."

"*You* know her, ma'am ! " cried the dame with a doubting smile. "La, bless'ee ma'am, I put on her first things." And Widow Blanket thought she had closed the conversation as with an iron spring.

"You are not aware, woman, who may become the master of this house," said Mrs. Jericho, "you are not aware what you may want, and then"—

"La, ma'am ! I'm sure to get what I want," said the Dame smiling. "Sartin. I shall soon want nothin' but a coffin ; and folks must give me that for their own sakes."

"What do you think of that ? " asked Jericho. "'Pon my life ! these people talk of coffins as if they had a right to 'em—as if they came into the world with a future property in coffins."

"At your years," said Monica, venturing a reflection, "you ought to be ashamed to talk in that manner. Like an aged heathen—as if you'd no fear of death."

"Fear, Miss ! Oh dear ! Oh dear ! What a world would this be, special to folks like I,—if there was no death ! What a cruel prison, Miss ! And now, after what I've seen, and what

I've borne, what a comfort it is—like sabbath after work—what a comfort it is, to think of rest in the churchyard. Ay"—said the old woman, raising her shaking hand, and smiling as she scanned the gentlefolks about her—"Ay, what a comfort to think of that long, sweet Saturday-night in the grave."

"She *is* quite a heathen," said Hodmadod. "When I say a heathen, I mean a very strange old woman."

CHAPTER X.

Mr. and Mrs. Jericho, arm-and-arm and in closest communion of soul, for some half-hour longer hung about the ground. The young ladies with Candituft and Hodmadod loitered where they would; too well occupied to break, by word or motion, upon the privacy of man and wife. Jericho listened very complacently to the magnificent designs of his helpmate. She had made her mind up that he should fill the world. She could never die happy if he did not fill it. Jogtrot Hall, for one country-seat to begin with, was indispensable to his greatness. "I am assured, love, by Mizzlemist"—began Mrs. Jericho—

"Hm! Where is he? You said it was an engagement. To be sure. He was to meet us here," interrupted Jericho, tetchily.

"The engagement was provisional; it was, indeed, love; and he may come yet. Well, Solomon, the Doctor tells me that the whole estate may be had for thirty thousand pounds," and Mrs. Jericho at the moment looked as artless, as innocent, as though she had said thirty thousand pence. There are people who make even a million a very small matter, merely by the condescending way of speaking of it. Mrs. Jericho had the art in perfection. "Only thirty thousand"—

"Only thirty thousand!" cried Jericho,—"Do you know where the money comes from?"

"Why, where should it come from,"—said the wife, with a sparkling smile, and tapping Jericho's cheek,—"where, but from where it grows?"

Jericho's jaw fell. Had his wife discovered his secret? "And where," he asked grimly, "where is that?"

"Why, my dear, in our mine, of course. Did you not say 'twas inexhaustible? and, to be sure, I asked no further. Besides, I've a great faith in nature; nature's a pattern maid-of-all-work, and does best when least meddled with. So you'll buy the estate? You must: your position in parliament requires it. All statesmen love the country."

"Mr. Pitt lived at Wimbledon," said Jericho, willing to be won.

"Of course," said Mrs. Jericho. And in a very few minutes the member for Toadsham consented to live at Marigolds; and to become the squire and patron of the village. Yet as he promised, he winced; for he thought of his wasting bank. Such was his life; urged by the devil expence upon one hand, and plucked by the devil remorse on the other. Never mind. He had a way to win back all. He would stop the waste; and once again grow plump and fat: though he was never better; never stronger. Still, people wondered to see him wither. Moreover, they looked oddly at him; and he had heard them drop strange, mystic words. Only twice more; only twice would he draw upon his bosom bank.

Mrs. Jericho, as she turned with her lord to meet her daughters, in the prettiest manner twitched a slip of laurel from a shrub, and waved it over Jericho's head. "I have conquered"—said Mrs. Jericho—"here is the lord for life of Jogtrot Hall."

"Oh, mamma! you will change the horrid name, I hope?" said Monica.

"And take away those dreadful peacocks?" cried Agatha, "They make one shiver."

"Magna Charta House would be a good name," said Hodmadod; "that is, when I say Magna Charta, I mean Runnymede Cottage. Of course, my dear sir, you'll ask all parliament, lords and commons, to the house-warming?"

"Couldn't we make it a fancy ball, and have 'em in historical dresses?" cried Agatha, jumping up and down, tipsy with happiness.

Candituft with a sudden, serious look, took Jericho aside. "It has just struck me," he said, "and I must out with it, though it is abrupt." He then took Jericho by the right hand, squeezed it, looked tenderly in his face, and with a voice of emotion, like one compelled to suggest a sharp surgical operation, asked—"How should you like to be made a baronet?"

Jericho twitched his shoulders; drew himself up; and put his hand in his bosom. "I have not the least ambition of the kind. But it might please my wife. Title is a straw that tickles women; so, for the sake of Mrs. Jericho, I might not resist."

Candituft looked relieved. It was plain, a leaden weight of doubt was removed from his soul. He smiled, and again squeezed Jericho's hand, saying as he squeezed—"Good creature! Bless you!"

Mr. Jericho returned to the party; and again and again he was hailed by all as the lord of the domain. "Hurrah!" cried the impulsive Agatha, jumping up, and hitching a wreath ot honeysuckle about the head of Jericho, "hurrah for the king of Marigolds!" The next moment Jericho stepped under an apple-tree; and the next, a shower of apples fell bouncing about him.

"The devil!" cried Jericho, running; and the ladies screamed.

"May it please your majesty," said a voice from the apple-tree, and immediately Basil Pennibacker's earnest face stared down through the boughs—"may it please your majesty, when a king is crowned, it is always customary to let fall a shower of golden pippins."

"Why, Basil, my love—you strange boy!—how came you in that tree?" cried Mrs. Jericho.

"Wonderful escape, my anxious madam, but calm your fears. You'll not believe my story. Never mind; in this world truth can wait: she's used to it," and in another moment Basil descended from the tree.

"Why, you were not here a few minutes ago, Basil," said Monica: "how did you get into the tree?"

"The fact is," said Basil, "I went up in a balloon, had a quarrel, and dropt my company. Quite in luck to fall among you, wasn't I? Now the hard truth is, I came here on business."

"On some labour of love, no doubt," said Candituft, winking with all his might.

"My dear sir," cried Basil, "I never see you that I don't wish I was a bulrush, to do nothing but bow. May I say one word, my revered sir?" and Basil turned to Jericho, who coldly assented, walking apart. "Now, sir, did you receive my letter?"

"I did," said Jericho.

"And you did not answer it? Because, don't let me blame the postman," said Basil.

"I did not answer it, young man," cried Jericho with his best emphasis. "Where nothing is to be said, I take it, silence is the best reply. In a word, I will not advance a single farthing."

"Not to assist your old friend Carraways?" cried Basil.

"He was never any friend of mine; a mere acquaintance," said Jericho impatiently.

"To be sure; friendship in ill-luck turns to mere acquaintance. The wine of life—as I've heard it called—goes into vinegar; and folks that hugged the bottle, shirk the cruet."

"I have nothing more to say, young man," said Jericho, turning from Basil.

"Well, I'm not sorry for it," answered Basil, waspishly, "for the sample I have had, doesn't encourage me to go on." Basil strove to dash aside his anger, and returned gaily to the party.

"And so you've taken the Lodge, eh?"

"Yes, Basil," cried Monica, "and we shall have such a rout to begin with."

"Then, of course you'll want your jewels," said Basil, wickedly. "The butcher brought 'em back, I hope?"

"The butcher! What *do* you mean?" cried Agatha. "Butcher!"

"There, girls—never mind him," cried Mrs. Jericho.

"I sent 'em back by the butcher." A mode of conveyance hitherto disguised to the young ladies. "I met him coming to the house, and on second thoughts I"—

"You foolish boy," cried Mrs. Jericho, anxious to set aside the subject; "come and tell me what really brought you here. Who could have expected you!"

"Ar'n't you delighted, dear boy," said the appeased Monica, "that we're coming to live here?"

"Live here! why none of you will ever be able to sleep for the ghosts," cried Basil.

"Ghosts!" exclaimed the ladies.

"Yes: the ghosts of the feasts you've had at the cost of good old Carraways. At twelve o'clock every night"—

"Now, don't be foolish, Basil," exclaimed Monica.

"I won't hear you," said Agatha, putting her fingers in her ears, and tripping backwards.

"At twelve o'clock at night every saucepan will be haunted: every mug, every tankard, every goblet, and every custard-cup will go banging, clanging, ringing, tinkling, with the ghosts of the dinners and the suppers you've had in this house. You won't air your bed of nights, that there sha'n't be a red-hot ghost in the warming pan."

"Then, I fear, Basil, we may not count upon you as a visitor, unless indeed you defy apparitions?" said Mrs. Jericho.

"No, my dear madam, I shall never rent a spare bed here, I assure you. Moreover, pray don't summon me to King Jericho's banquet, for I shall be sure to have other business. By the way, as you've entered upon your dominion, permit me"—said Basil, taking off his hat and approaching his father-in-law—"permit me, your majesty, to give you seisin of it."

"What does the boy mean?" cried Mrs. Jericho. "Seisin!"

"Quite right, my dear madam. Seisin's the word. You've no notion of the amount of law I know. In another fortnight I'm called, and then—upon my life when I think of some people, they fire me with ambition. They do. I'll get upon the bench, if it's only to hang 'em."

"Not you, my dear sir," said Candituft—"you don't know your own heart. We do."

"I haven't your charity; I wish I had: only a little — you've too much. You waste it. 'Pon my life you are so good, you'd pour rose-water over a toad," and Basil leered at the Man Tamer. Then, stooping, Basil picked up an apple, and holding it between his finger and thumb, with ceremonious gravity addressed the ireful Man of Money.—"Permit me, sir, in this little apple to give you seisin of the land. And, sir, this little apple is wondrously appropriate to the interesting occasion. It is golden, and smiling, and like yourself."

"Beautiful, Basil! and so true," said Agatha.

"During your many visits, you were here when this apple was a blossom. No doubt of it, gorgeous sir, that when this apple was a pretty pink and white flower, you were here, rosy, and light, and glad; and looking full of pleasant promise to jolly old Carraways. Times are changed, sir; you're very rich: the blossom's grown into fruit. A flower you were, and"—and Basil threw the apple up, catching it — "and a golden pippin you are. Therefore, sir, take the apple as seisin; 'tis so like you. Oh, very like! See, a golden promise"— Basil bit the apple in half — "a sour and bitter inside; and to make the thing complete — look, sir—a maggot at the heart." And Basil dropt the fruit with the sentence.

There was general consternation at the boldness, the wickedness (as Candituft whispered) of the simile. Mrs. Jericho, with all the fears of woman, moved between her husband and Basil. The young man bowed to his mother, turned upon his heel, and went his way. There was a dead pause. At length Mr. Jericho solemnly proclaimed to his wife: "Mrs. Jericho, I will no longer encourage that viper. Either you give up your son, or give up me." Mrs. Jericho made no answer; it was not a genial moment for reply. She silently placed her arm in Jericho's, and led the way to the carriage. They would make a little circuit of the country, ere they returned to town.

A very few words will account for the sudden appearance of Basil in the apple-tree. Bob Topps, the old serving-man of Carraways—we may say old, for he had grown from mere childhood to the maturity of seven-and-twenty in the Squire's house —had, within the past week, married Jenny White, honoured, it may be remembered, in a former page, by the praise of Sir Arthur Hodmadod. Mrs. Topps had removed with her husband to London, where Bob had started as an independent cabman, driving his own vehicle—certainly the very neatest on the stand; for the which neatness there was this reason: the cab had been the property of Carraways: one of the chattels of the Hall, knocked down, dispersed by the hammer—at times more terrible, more crushing, more causeful of blood and tears than the hammer of Thor — the hammer of the broker. Topps with his savings bought the carriage. "It might fall into worse hands," he said. "Now, he felt almost a love for it, for the sake of them as had ridden in it." Again; he said "he shouldn't like to go into any other service. A cabman's life was, after all, an independent thing. He could sit upon his box, and — beholden to nobody — could see how the world wagged about him." True it is that Mrs. Topps had a first objection to the brass badge, an objection that had more than its inherent force, for it was made in the honeymoon. Still, as it was the honeymoon, she the more readily smiled and, as Bob said, "listened to reason." "I tell you what, Jenny," said Bob, "the noblest sight on earth is a man talking reason, and his wife sitting at the fireside listening to him." Everybody wore a badge of some sort, ran the philosophy of Bob. Brass or gold, the thing was the same, it was only the metal that was different. Whereupon Mrs. Topps was thoroughly convinced, and we verily believe was rather proud of her husband's badge than otherwise.

A very natural incident had thrown Basil and Bob together. The night before, Basil had supped some three miles from his chambers. Bob by chance was hailed, and drove young Pennibacker to his student's home. "What have I to pay?" asked Basil. "Why, sir," said the neophyte, "I hope you won't think eighteenpence too much." "What!" cried Basil, in thrilling surprise. "Well, then, sir, say sixteenpence," said the shrinking cabman. Basil, laying hold of the man's collar and crying—"A vehicular wonder! I must have a portrait of you," pulled him under a lamp; and thereupon took place what Basil called a tremendous recognition. In few words, Bob told of his marriage, and his prospects; and moreover, that he was going to Marigolds the next day. He was going to drive his wife there: he had borrowed a cab, and lent his own for the day; for he hoped he knew himself better than to take what had been Squire Carraways' to the village. Miss Bessy wanted a few trifles that Jenny knew best about; and Jenny herself had not brought all her things from Marigolds: indeed, she seemed as if there would be no end to her moving; it seemed as if the things grew she had left behind her. In few words, Basil made an appointment with Bob for the journey. "I should like to see the Hall once more myself," said Basil, "and I should like to go quietly;

so I tell you what. I'll take the cab for the day; and out of my abounding generosity shall be happy to present Mrs. Topps with a lift." "You're very kind, sir," said Bob, delighted. "She can ride on the box close aside me." And Basil came, a visitor to the Hall. When he learned that his family were there, in the idleness of his high spirits, he mounted a tree in the hope of a joke; and, such as the joke was in the apple-shower, he had it. Mrs. Topps very soon despatched her errand at the Hall, where poor Mrs. Blanket duly wept over her as "one she had nursed from a baby, and one who was going back, a wife, to London."

Basil, we must observe, did not, as he had appointed, arrive at the village in the cab of Topps. In the morning he somehow thought horseback would be a more fitting, a more expeditious mode of transit. Mrs. Topps herself was very soon reconciled to the new arrangement. She could not but reflect that she would then have all the inside of the vehicle for a few of the things she had left behind. As the Jerichos drove through the village, they looked curiously at a London cab at a cottage-door, with baskets, and shrubs, and flowers in pots standing about it; and with "that young woman that wore the silver bee," kissing a score of children one after the other, duly setting aside every child when finished. It was, indeed, a very busy, a very exciting afternoon in Marigolds, when Mrs. Topps returned, just for an hour or two from London. She brought an importance with her, that the people could not but feel, though they could not explain. She had seen all the sights of London; and she was stared at as though some of their glory hung still about her. There was Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, the Queen's Palace, the Waxwork, and all the playhouses in some odd way mixed up with Jenny Topps. (It would be hard for some of us to look at a man fresh from the Chinese court, and not think of long almond eyes, white clay faces, pigtails, and peacocks' feathers.) Jenny had, from babyhood, been a favourite with all the village. She was so good-natured, so cheerful, and what was an especial virtue, in the words of a female eulogist, "she never seemed to think nothing of her good looks." Clever Jenny! Twenty times had she been asked how she liked London, and how she liked her husband? Whether she was as happy as when at home—and whether—and here the querists hugely laughed—and whether she would not like to come back again. To all these inquiries Jenny with a sweet gravity—for they were grave questions to her—made due reply. "She had no notion, though she had been there twice before, that there had been such a place as London in this world; and she never thought anybody could be so happy as she was, out of London." And then she dwelt upon a fear that did now and then possess her. It was, that her husband would some day quite lose himself — it was so hard for him in his business to learn the ways of town.

Basil, in a dull, dreamy mood, turned his horse towards London. He had seen the Hall for the last time. Had taken, as he then believed, a long farewell of its new possessors. In his indignation at the selfishness of Jericho, he felt a new strength in himself. He felt a spirit of independence. He would not owe the benefit of another shilling to such a man, upon whom fortune seemed to have fallen like a disease, withering and corrupting him. And there was a mystery in the means of the man, so suddenly rich, that, he was sure of it, would burst in some terrible catastrophe. Of course, Basil had no suspicion of the supernatural source of Jericho's wealth : the young man's imagination was insufficient to such a thought : again, even in the days of Jericho, the foolish old faith in fairy-works, and compacts with the devil, ensuring ready profit for future perdition, — was dead and scorned. If men came by strange modes to sudden, mysterious wealth, it could not be by conjuration ; but by dull, prosaic craft. The wizard's circle was of no more avail ; the devil no longer rose in the infernal ring to barter wealth for souls. Nothing was left but the mere hocus-pocus of unromantic knavery. Hence, in the conviction of Basil, father-in-law Jericho had juggled with the dark spirits of fraud to possess himself of sudden substance. There could be no doubt of the horrid truth ; and the wasted and wasting condition of the rich man, proclaimed the ravages of his conscience ; of the worm in his brain he could not kill. And then Basil suddenly thought of Jericho's ghastly look, as the apple fell at his foot. And the next thought imparted to the young man a vigour of mind, a hopefulness of heart, he had hitherto unknown. As he rode on, the cloud cleared away. He had seemed to himself shut in, narrowed, dwarfed, whilst depending upon the aid of another. And now in his very contempt for the man — so strangely, so monstrously rich — the future stretched brightly before him. He would stand up, and fight the world in his own strength, and take no condescending help from any man. Armed and assured by this blithe determination, Basil, some ten miles still from home, and the evening closing in, spurred his horse. It would not be too late even that very evening—at least he would not suffer himself to think so — to call upon Bessy's father. Yes : he would at once put his new faith in practice ; he would not sleep without taking the first — and that the most important, most anxious step, — in the bright, open path that he would hereafter journey.

" Hey, hallo ! Why, Basil !—Mr. Pennibacker ! " cried Doctor

Mizzlemist, leaning far out of the first-floor window of the Silver Lion, the glad half-way house 'twixt Marigolds and London. "Hallo! Why so fast? If you knew what was in the cellar you'd draw bridle, I take it."

"That he would; hm?" cried Colonel Bones; who had joined Mizzlemist; both it appeared upon evidence, then and there in the Silver Lion, enjoying what the Doctor in his meekness was wont to call his glass of wine and his nut.

"You haven't seen anything of Mr. Jericho and the ladies?" asked Mizzlemist. "They must have gone the other road: and so we've missed. Very provoking; but we're trying to comfort ourselves. Won't you join us?"

"So you had an appointment with my honoured father, eh, Doctor?" asked Basil.

"Why, that is, rather an appointment. Not exactly a fixed thing, but come in; you haven't dined," said Mizzlemist. After a minute's thought Basil turned about, and dismounted at the door. Instantly he stood in the best room of the Silver Lion, with both his hands pressed and shaken by Mizzlemist. "I suppose you've been to the Hall, eh? Been to pick out your own corner, I take it? Noble fabric, my dear young sir. Noble fabric! The very look of it is an honour to the hospitality of the country! Wasn't I saying as much, Colonel? A palace for the king of good fellows?"

"What do I know of palaces?" cried Bones. "A beggar like me! I only wish you'd let me keep quiet in my own corner cupboard. With my own mutton chop and my pint of small ale," and Bones poured out the wine, looked at it with an unctuous tremor of the lip, and threw it off.

"But you've not dined," cried Mizzlemist to Basil. "What will you have? Country fare, you know."

"Nothing. The fact is, I picked a bit with the gypsies; always dine with the gypsies when I come into the country; always," said Basil with a laugh.

"With gypsies! Bless me—can't be true—I mean, very odd company, Mr. Pennibacker. Very," and Mizzlemist rubbed his hands, looking doubtfully askance at Basil.

"Most polite people on earth," cried Basil. "And for poultry, I assure you, quite by themselves. True, upon my life; I can eat nobody's ducks but the gypsies'. Ha, sir! Gypsy life is the real life, sir. Nothing to do with parchment, Doctor."

"Why, no, young gentleman," said Mizzlemist with dignity, "save, perhaps, when they go sheep-stealing."

"No house-rent; no taxes; no rates; no infernal respectbility," cried Basil, bent upon his humour.

"Ha! ha! very good. Beggars all. Hm?" cried Bones. "Capital state, when people have no respectability. Ugh! it eats a beggar like me out of house and home."

"Well, I didn't imagine that, Colonel," said Basil. "I thought you always put out your respectability to board on other people."

"Capital! Very good! The fact is, my dear young sir—come, take a glass of wine—people won't let me alone. They will carry me about with them; no doubt, to show their humility. I tell them I'm a beggar: what then? they will have the pauper with them—they will. Here's the Doctor—would drag me out to-day, to come and look at old Carraway's Lodge"—and again Bones emptied his glass.

"Of course," said Mizzlemist: "if your friends didn't look after you, Colonel, you'd never stir. You'd take no exercise. You'd sit in that arm-chair of yours till the sexton came for you. And the fact is"—and the Doctor archly smiled—"we're not going to lose you in that way. No: it's our duty as fellow-creatures and Christians to take care of you, and we will do it;" and Mizzlemist's kindly emphasis almost brought the tears into his eyes. "Poor lone creature! You never knew what it was to have the tenderness of a wife. You haven't a dear soul, growing all the kinder and tenderer for age, haunting your fire-side; and so we must take care of you—and we *will*, old fellow."

"All too good, much too good to a beggar," cried Bones, with his fore-finger scratching the nape of his neck.

"Come, sir, take a glass of wine," and Mizzlemist urged Basil. Then dropping back in his chair, he gazed at the young gentleman in all the fulness of after-dinner admiration. "Ha, sir! it is something delightful—nay, very delightful, indeed, only to look at you."

"Indeed," cried Basil, "glad to hear it. Easy way of getting a living. Shilling a-head for grown fools, six-pence for children. Come sir, down with your money."

"In your connection with Mr. Jericho, you have a grand field before you," said the unoffended Mizzlemist.

"Hm! Can you tell me if the field's in crop? And what it is?" asked Basil.

"Whatever you like, sir. I am afraid, Mr. Pennibacker"—and Mizzlemist became very serious—"I am afraid you do not sufficiently estimate the position of Mr. Jericho. See what he has done already. Is he not in Parliament? Is he not in the very highest society? Next Tuesday—yes, absolutely next Tuesday—he dines with the Duke St. George, at Red Dragon

House; and with his inestimable lady and daughters, will at once, be dipped in the Pactolean vortex—if I've not forgot my Christ-church classics—in the Pactolean vortex of fashionable existence."

"Well, and what will Mr. Jericho pay? What, for self, wife and daughters?" asked Basil. "What will be the price of admission to the Red Dragon mahogany?"

"Price, Mr. Pennibacker?" cried Mizzlemist.

"Price? Why, you can't tell; neither can Jericho himself. More than that, I've my doubts, if even the Duke of St. George has made up his mind to the exact sum to be borrowed of the Man of Money. It must be for a loan, or do folks think money, like the measles, catching? The Duke St. George, of Red Dragon House! Why, he's a very river of royal blood. From the heptarchy downwards, there's been a prince or a princess, or a royal bishop, or something of the sort, cut into the stream—and he contains in himself the very best blood, laid on from twenty crowned houses. And to think that he should shake hands with Jericho—that he should invite such a piece of clay—why it must be for the gilding."

"My dear young gentleman," said Mizzlemist, with a gravity almost affectionate, "disabuse your mind of such vulgar cant. Be above it, sir. Don't think that money can do anything and everything—it can't. There must be inward worth. The gold candlestick—if I may be so bold as to use a figure—the gold candlestick may be prized, I grant; but its magnificence is only subservient to its use; the gold is very well: but after all, it is the light we look to." And Mizzlemist believed he had clenched the question.

"Yes," said Basil; "so that the candlestick has gold enough, I take it, it may burn anything: mutton fat's as good as wax."

"I say again, don't think it. Mr. Jericho, independent of his wealth, is a man of talent. I assure you"—now Mizzlemist was never more serious—"I assure you, I forget them, but some of his admirable bits of wit are now going about. I forget them, but I pledge myself, they are allowed to be very brilliant."

"All's one for that," and Basil emptied his glass.

"But as I was observing, Mr. Pennibacker, you have all the world before you," said Mizzlemist.

"I quite feel that, sir, in the new profession that within this half-hour I have determined to adopt."

"Why, sir, when you go to the bar"—began Mizzlemist.

"No, I've abandoned the thought. The bar's too full. Bench can't be lengthened to hold a thousandth part of us: and mus'n't sit in each other's laps. So many, nine-tenths must die like spiders with nothing to spin. I thought of the army. But that's going, sir ; going, soon to be gone. Bless you, laurels are fast sinking from the camp to the kitchen. In a very little while, sir, and the cook will rob Cæsar of his wreath to flavour a custard."

"Ha! ha! very good. Wait a little though,—hm?" cried Colonel Bones.

"I do not very fully grapple with your position,"—said Mizzlemist, hesitating.

"Don't try, then, sir," said Basil, "'twill only strain your intellect. Therefore, as I see all the usual avenues shut up—'no thoroughfare' writ over 'em, I shall strike out a road for myself. Meet a want, or make a want, that's the motto, sir, for a new business."

"Well, there really is something in that," said Mizzlemist.

"Now, I intend to meet a want—a very craving want," said Basil. "And with such benevolent determination, I purpose to start in life as a Comic Undertaker."

"Good, devilish good!" and Bones rubbed his hands; and Mizzlemist stared.

"It will be my lasting reputation," said Basil, "to meet the grand desire of the age. For do you not perceive, sir, the great tendency of our time is to sink the serious, and to save the droll? Folks who have an eagle in their coat-of-arms begin to be ashamed of it, and paint it out for the laughing-goose. In a very little while and we shall put a horse-collar round about the world, expressly for all the world to grin through it."

"You know best, Mr. Basil," said Mizzlemist, "but surely 'twill be a great stop to business."

"Now, in pursuit of the comic," said Basil, "I think we might very successfully carry fun into the churchyard. A man of true humour, sir—and such a man every morning when I rise I am in the habit of considering myself—may put a capital joke into an epitaph, and get a broad grin from a skeleton. I think I see my board and card—'Basil Pennibacker, the Original Comic Undertaker. Funerals acted in the happiest vein of humour. Mutes of every drollery.' I think that will do, sir."

"It will never be permitted, sir; never," said the literal Mizzlemist. "The legislature, sir, will not permit it. I like a joke, sir; I think I may say I like a joke, but when the ashes of"—

"What! Eh? Why here comes Mr. Jericho, pelting along. Hm?" cried Colonel Bones, who had run to the window.

"Then I'm off," said Basil, and instantly he ran down to the door, jumped in his saddle, and was speedily far away in a cloud of dust.

Mizzlemist approached the window. Jericho's equipage came rattling down the hill, Hodmadod and Candituft galloping a little in advance. The carriage pulled up at the door of the Silver Lion. Mizzlemist had descended, and approached Mr. Jericho. "I am very sorry, sir, that I should have missed you," said the Doctor. "I brought out the Colonel for a ride, and thought we should all meet at the Lodge. I thought you'd have stopt"—

"I don't stop, Doctor Mizzlemist," said Jericho coldly, whilst Mizzlemist stept back in astonishment—"I don't stop for anybody. Who are you, sir—whom do you take me for?" bellowed Jericho, whilst Mizzlemist stared, and his jaw fell in mute wonder. Here, Colonel Bones, benevolently thought he might come to the rescue of his friend. Whereupon bending his iron face into a very severe smile, he began—

"I do assure you, Jericho, that"—

"Jericho!" exclaimed the Man of Money, with an oath that passed upon the Colonel a very hot and very summary sentence, "Who asked you to speak? A toad-eater! A bone-picking pauper! Drive on!" and Jericho sank back like an exhausted savage; the coach and cavaliers flew forward, and Mizzlemist confounded, groped his way back to the Colonel, whom he found seated, foaming at the mouth, and violently cutting the air about him with a knife he had taken from the table, inarticulately spluttering—"Toad-eater! Majesty's officer! Bone-picker! Blood—blood—blood!"

After a time, Mizzlemist took the knife from the Colonel, and entreated him to be calm. He was immediately obedient. He filled a bumper, glanced at his friend, and in a soft but very decided voice, as though making himself a solemn promise of some especial treat, said—"I'll have his blood, sir, his blood."

CHAPTER XI.

We have again to introduce the reader to Gilbert Carraways. The circumstances under which the reader and he last met were so very different, so opposite to the present condition of the worthy gentleman, that we may be justified in treating the old man with something of the deference due to a stranger. In one of the Primrose Places to be found selvaging London—for we care not to be a whit more definite in the whereabout—Carraways, his wife and daughter, had taken refuge from the storm that had broken over their heads ; a storm that had made clear work of every stick of their property. No hurricane could more completely sweep away a field of sugar-cane. In a small, neat, comfortable room sat the ruined family. The old man was reading, or thought he read. In a few weeks the snow had come down upon his head with a heavy fall. In a few weeks, his cheeks were lined and lengthened. He had been held—so ruthlessly held—face to face with misery, that his smile, that was constant as the red in his cheek, had well nigh vanished. Now and then, as he exchanged looks with his daughter, it glimmered a little ; played about his mouth, to leave it only in utter blankness. Still he went on reading ; still he turned page after page ; and believed that he was laying in a stock of knowledge for his future life. For he had again—he would tell his daughter with a bright look—he had again to begin the world. Hard beginning ! Dreary voyage, with neither youth to fight the storm ; nor the hope of youth to wile away the long, dark, dreary, watch—to sing the daylight in. But this he would not think of. At least he thought he would not. He felt himself as strong as ever ; yes, even stronger. He could not have hoped to bear the blow so well. He was never better ; never. His glorious health was left him ; and therefore, why despair ? In this way will the brain of the stout man cheat itself. It will feel whole, and strong ; and for the viler cracks and flaws, they are not to be heeded. Mere trifles. And then some day, some calm and sunny time, that peace has seemed to choose for itself, for a soft, sweet pause—with the tyrant brain secure and all vain-glorious,—the trifle kills. In this way do strong men die upwards.

Gilbert Carraways was, at our first meeting, set about by all the creature delights of life. He was the lord of abundance. The man who had nothing to do with want and misery, but to exercise the noblest prerogative of happy humanity—namely, to destroy them wheresoever he found them preying upon his fellows. Wealth was gone. He was a beggar ; but in his poverty were thoughts that might glorify his fireside. He had used his means for good ; and, at least, might feel enriched by the harvest of his recollections. With his face anxious, lengthened, and dim, there was a dignity in the old man that we do not think we ever recognised at the Hall. For he had to bear a load of misery ; and he sat erect, and with his spirit conquering, looked serenely about him.

Bessy and her mother sat at work, and to see them for the first time, they seemed as though they had never had a finer room to sit in. Already were they so self-accommodated to the place. In their days of fortune, Mrs. Carraways—good, kind creature ever!—nevertheless loved to show to folks the finest outside. She confessed to a pride in exhibiting to the world the best holiday proofs of worldly prosperity. Her husband would call her his old butterfly. And, in a few weeks, she had cast all such thoughts, even as the butterfly its wings, never again to be enjoyed, or dreamt of. She looked the good wife of one of Carraway's late clerks, at some hundred and fifty pounds a year; with those sixty shillings a week—to provide home and food, and raiment; the worldly all-in-all. And if at times she was a little, just a little wayward, in the full blaze of fortune—as the best-tempered folks are sometimes apt to be tetchy in over-warm weather—now, she sat in the shade all gentleness, and smiles, and patience; as though she, perhaps, remembered those little breaks of temper, to be afforded when at ease with the world, but all too serious, too wilful an extravagance for a poor man's home.

Bessy was at first astonished, broken-hearted that she had never seen, scarcely heard, and that coldly, ceremoniously, of many of her friends. She could not for a long time comprehend the cause. And then, she speedily agreed with her mother that, possibly, an extreme sense of delicacy kept them absent—silent. "They may not like to intrude upon our misfortune," said Mrs. Carraways very sadly. Bessy at once acknowledged it must be so with Miss Candituft. She recollected that with that young lady it was a favourite phrase—"the sacredness of adversity." And then Bessy could not but think—"She might have written more than once." But Bessy was young and hopeful. The tempest had blown over her; and once passed, she was again smiling and erect. A lily after a thunder-storm.

Such the group at the fire-side. There is, however, a person at the street-door well-known to the reader. We have tried, with all his faults, to make him a sort of favourite. This outside person is Basil Pennibacker. He has galloped to London, and straightway taken the road to Primrose Row. He has hardly shaped his thoughts into the roughest form of speech; but he feels that he has something to say; nay, his heart is full of it—and it shall out before he sleeps. And with this brave determination, he marches to the door; feeling, nevertheless, as though with all his courage, he was walking up to a cannon. He stops short at the step. The next moment he mounts it, and the next he raises the knocker. And the next, as softly, tenderly as ever human fingers touched a human wound, he lays the knocker down. He is much relieved, and gently descends the step. It is too late—much too late to call. Hush! The clock of St. Asphodel's strikes nine—it is unreasonable, unmannerly to think of it. Basil crosses the road, and much comforts himself looking at an upper window. There is a light; and now a female figure moves to and fro. It is Bessy! Her light, active form; the turn of her head, so like a wood-nymph's! Now, she comes to the window; and now the light is gone and the room is dark. For a moment, the hope of Basil is quenched—dead. And the next instant, raising his hat, and gazing at the window, he cries—"God bless you!" and takes to his heels, as though he had done something wrong, unmannerly.

Now, as it must be evident to the well-meaning few who read these pages, that we propose to set down nothing but truth, let us clear up as we go. It was not Bessy, as believed by Basil. It was a solitary, pale young thing—one of the cloud of genteel phantoms that flit across our daily path—who compliment life, by endeavouring to live by needle and thread. It was not Bessy, upon whom Basil called down a benison. But let it rest upon the stranger's head. Who so spiritually rich as not to need it?

"And do you think, Bessy"—said her father, for having disposed of Basil for the night, we return to the fireside—"and do you think, my wench, that you'll make a good sailor?"

"I don't know," said Bessy, "but I'll try."

"Well said. It's the most we can promise against sea-sickness. A long voyage, wench," said Carraways.

"My dear Gilbert," said the wife with anxious looks, "are you resolved—are you really resolved?"

"I have looked at it every way, lass: I have turned the matter on every side. Weighed the risks with the good chances. And I am resolute." A deep sigh escaped the wife. "Why, what's the matter?" asked her husband.

"Nothing. I meant nothing—at least, nothing, if you *are* resolved. And yet, Gilbert, we are old"—

"Aye, that's it; old to move. But, my good dame, what will our years bring us if we stop? I tell you, I can't bear to think of it. I should die a thousand deaths here in London. I couldn't go into the City—and somehow, I know myself, I should be sure to be going there if I was near it—I couldn't go there, that every other face wouldn't seem to stab me. Oh! I have seen the sight myself,—and I won't provide the show."

"What sight, father?" asked Bessy, almost heedless of the question.

"The sight of a ruined man. An old man broken to bits, with no hope, no chance of patching. A piece of utter ruin with grey hairs upon it. The ghost of one who was 'a good man.' I've seen it. And I know what follows. I should pass people, and hear 'em talk—yes, feel 'em point at me. 'There, sir,'—says one to a country friend—'do you see that old man? Once one of the proudest fellows in the City, sir. One who held his head above every body. One who was as high as Lucifer' "—

"O, father! they never, never, could say that of you," cried Bessy, and her face coloured, and her eyes filled with tears.

"Ha! ten to one but they would say it, though. 'Tis hard for a man to tumble, and not get dirt about him, deserve it or not. 'As proud as Lucifer' they'd say; 'and now look at him—poor fellow!' Yes they'd call me—'poor fellow; not a penny, sir: not a farthing.' Now, I won't endure this. I've talked to myself. I've had a little conversation with this Gilbert Carraways—old fellow!—he and I were not such intimate acquaintance as we ought to have been in fair weather times—but I've talked to him since we've been in trouble, and the end of it is, wife, he won't suffer it. He won't," and Carraways struck the table.

"My dear Gilbert, do as you will—go where you will. Anywhere"—said the wife, and at length her heart loosened, and she fell upon her husband's neck—"so that we go all together."

Bessy laid down her work, and silently crept round her father's chair, and without a word, mingled her arms with her mother's. The old man felt the pressure of his daughter, and hugging wife and child close at his heart, he cried—"Yes; all together—all together." And in a minute, in a gay voice, and his eyes sparkling through their mist, Carraways said—"Come, it's time to go to bed. Good night," and he kissed his daughter. "I shall not be up long; but I want to finish these few pages." And Carraways was left alone; trying with all his might to see a Land of Promise for his old age in a golden book, written for the hopes of emigrants.

The next morning, Basil Pennibacker—for we must for a page or two return to him—rose, determined to see Primrose Row by daylight. As he took his breakfast, his looks fell with peculiar satisfaction upon a large bunch of heartsease that, ere he slept, with his own hands he had placed in water; that, ere he had sat down to begin his meal, he had examined with an eye more curious than was his wont in the small matter of flowers. Indeed, he was himself a little surprised at the interest hanging about his heart for those few bits of purple and yellow "freaked with jet." However, he was satisfied of their beauty and freshness; and therefore breakfasted as heartily as man with cheerful conscience may.

It was about mid-day when Bessy was broken in upon by the servant girl, who came almost in a bunch into the room—so hurried, so anxious, and withal so pleased seemed she to deliver her tidings—to proclaim with scarlet face, and panting breath, that—"there was a gentleman below that wanted Miss." Now, neither Mr. nor Mrs. Carraways were in. This circumstance the girl observed, she knew, and had already acquainted the gentleman with the fact; a fact that, in truth, had in no way disconcerted him. Bessy was finally stopt in her inquiries by the girl, who remembered she had a card.

"Mr. Basil Pennibacker."—

Bessy reddened as she took it. "Yes, Miss, I'll show him up directly," said the girl.

"Stay, Susan—I—yes; you are quite right. Pray show the gentleman in," said Bessy; and, as she heard the foot of Basil on the stairs, her heart kept count with every step, and she felt cold as a stone.

Basil entered the room. We verily believe his own mother—doting parent that she was—would not have known him. He was almost awkward in his bashfulness; his eyes wandered; he feebly smiled; and deeply blushed. Bessy, somehow, showed more courage of the two.

"I'm very sorry, Mr. Pennibacker, that there is no one but myself at home. Very sorry that"—

"Pray don't mention it, Miss Carraways; I assure you I—that is—I hope Mr. and Mrs. Carraways are well; as well, my dear madam"—and Basil began to feel his ground—"as well as I could wish them."

"Quite well," said Bessy, "I do not think my mother can be long. And I'm sure she'll be glad to see you. We do not see many friends now," said Bessy; and then she could have bitten her tongue that she had said it: he might believe that she hinted at his mother and sisters.

"After all, Miss Carraways," said Basil, "how very few people there are worth thinking friends!"

"It may be so, sir; I fear it is so; but," said Bessy, "it is a hard truth to learn, learn it when we may."

Basil was again at fault; again his tongue hung fire; and he wondered, and was a little piqued at the self-possession of Bessy, when he—a man—was in such a tremor. His brain was wandering for new words, when happily, his eyes fell upon the superb bunch of heartsease idly grasped by his hand. "Happily, Miss Carraways," said Basil, suddenly supported, "happily there are friends that will smile upon us till death."

"Oh dear, yes! Life, indeed, would be a sad lot could we not think so," and Bessy's eyes glistened; and glistening, made Basil wince.

She never looked so beautiful. Heaped about with luxury; a little rose-bud queen in a golden palace, with fairy birds singing to her, and happiness like an atmosphere around her—she never looked so beautiful as in that bit of tenpenny muslin—standing upon Kidderminster, at the rate of eighteen shillings a-week, boots included. (Now all this went jumbling, jostling through the brain of Basil, as he caught the dewy flash of Bessy's innocent blue eyes.)

"There are friends, Miss Carraways, whom you have been kind to, who still have grateful looks. There are friends, I saw thousands of them yesterday, looking all the happier for your care. I was told of some, for whom you had a particular regard. I"—here Basil began again to feel abashed and tongue-tied. "I mean friends by the outer wall, opposite the summer-house with—with Diana in it"—

"I recollect the summer-house," said Bessy, and her little hand clutched the back of a chair.

"Of course. I was sure you would. Well, the truth is, my dear lady—pardon me, Miss Carraways—I was there, and I thought you would like to see some of these friends, and—the fact is,—my dear Bessy—ten million pardons, madam, I—the fact is, as I said, thinking you would like to see them, I gave them a—a general invitation,—have brought 'em here, and here they are."

Basil held the heartsease towards Bessy. She curtseyed, held her trembling hand to take them. "Thank you! A thousand thanks!" she smiled. And then she fell in a chair, and burying her face among the flowers, gave up her heart to weeping.

Poor Basil! he felt awe-struck by the passion he had roused. He wished the floor to open, and himself—to use his own after-phrase—to be repealed for ever. "If I had thought"—he stammered.

"Oh thank you, sir—a thousand thanks," cried Bessy, and she wept anew.

"My dear madam," said Basil, "I am a foolish person; a very foolish person. Another time I hope to be permitted to assure you that I meant no folly; upon my soul, I mean truth—earnest, honest, eternal truth, if truth be in this world. I"—And here Basil distressed, discomfited, rushed from the room.

In another hour, Bessy was calm and sad—yet not altogether sad. The heartsease were placed in a glass, and again and again Bessy would go to them, and, as though putting her finger under the chin of baby loveliness, as though the flower were a sentient thing, she would lift the curl of the blossom as it hung over the vessel. She was gazing at the heartsease when Jenny Topps was shown into the room.

"Well, Mrs. Topps," said Bessy, with a melancholy smile.

"Now, not that I'm ashamed of Topps's name, why should I be?"—said the young wife, looking very proud of it,—"but do call me Jenny, Miss, as afore. Do, please."

"Well, then, Jenny."—

"Well, then, what do you think, Miss? We went to the Hall yesterday. Ha, you should only see it now! No; I didn't mean that. I wouldn't have you see it for any money. We've brought away what you wanted. But that's not it. What do you think? Now, don't cry—promise me, you won't cry."

"Well, then, Jenny, I promise you," and somehow Bessy made the promise with better self-assurance than she could have boasted a little more than an hour ago.

"Well, then, them nasty Jerichos—for I hate 'em"—

"You should hate nobody, Jenny," said Bessy.

"Perhaps not, ma'am. But natur' that makes us love, makes us hate, and we can't help it. Them Jerichos is going to take the Hall."

"Is it possible?" asked Bessy, with strange calmness.

"I saw 'em all there. Going to take the Hall," repeated Jenny, much incensed.

"Very well. Somebody must live there," said Bessy. And then, strangely perplexed, she looked at the heartsease, and knew not what to think.

Basil, on his hurried way home, was no less perplexed. He accused himself of folly, cruelty. He had torn open the girl's heart with his clumsy blunder; and of what avail was it, that he would die to dry her tears?

"Why, my dear fellow," said an acquaintance, stopping Basil, fuming with remorse, "My dear fellow, what is the matter with you? Anything wrong? Anything I can do to help you?"

"Yes," exclaimed Basil. "Bind me to you for life, and get me a coalheaver."

"A coalheaver!" cried his friend.

"A coalheaver," repeated Basil. "In my present state of feeling, nothing—I know it—nothing can restore me to tranquillity till I've licked a coalheaver."

CHAPTER XII.

Already had Mr. Jericho banked the purchase-money for Jogtrot Hall. Thirty thousand pounds' worth of flesh had he sacrificed to buy to himself a country mansion ; the better, in the flattering words of his wife, to fill the world ; who delighted as she was with the obedient ambition of her lord was, nevertheless, touched in her tenderest affections when she contemplated his diminished presence. Even Jericho himself, prepared as he was for the astonishment of his family and familiars, winced as he caught the astounded glances of his circle. Breeks, the tailor, began to measure, and to re-measure with an increasing wonder, that in a little time deepened into awe, and threatened to explode into terror. "It's like measuring a penknife for a sheath," Breeks declared to his wife. "That Mr. Jericho's quite a puzzle, Julia ; quite. There's no knowing where the paddin' ends and the man begins. Man, Julia ! He isn't a man at all, but a cotton-pod. Why he can't have no more stomach than a 'bacco-pipe." Such were the confidential communings of man with wife ; and, after certain intervals, with a whole round of Mrs. Breeks' bosom gossips. In a little time, it was the growing belief of a large circle that Jericho was no flesh, no man at all. "He was made up of coats," ran the rumour, "like an onion."

Jericho, we have said, was tenderly alive to his daily waste. Again and again had he passed the silken lace about his chest ; the lace that, if the bank continued to be drawn upon, soon promised to wind round and round the anatomy of Jericho, like whipcord round a boy's peg-top. Jericho, however, comforted himself—so had he taken measures—that the bank should be closed for many a day. He would not peel himself to a leaf, let his wife conjure as she might. Fortunately, he was never in better health. If he lost in substance, mere flesh, he somehow obtained an unusual toughness and strength of fibre. He was lithe, elastic as a rod of steel. And after all, what was flesh ? Animal grossness. The less he had of it, the more spiritual the human creature.

But Mrs. Jericho would not thus be comforted. She had half-uttered her fears to Mr. Candituft. Would introduce Doctor Dodo, a friend of his, as a friend ; not to alarm Mr. Jericho. Certainly not. But merely to lead him in the meanderings of a pleasant morning talk to his own individual case. Mrs. Jericho might depend upon the care of Candituft. He would study even the weakness of dear Jericho as a weakness to be reverenced. "Some weaknesses," said Candituft, "were like flawed China : quite as good as the perfect thing, if not too rudely handled." Mrs. Jericho declared the thought to be true and beautiful.

Now, it grieves us, as faithful chroniclers of this history to pain the reader with the intelligence that at the very time conjugal love and manly friendship were sweetly plotting for better health and insured life in the person of Solomon Jericho, there were men—certainly two constructive homicides—who contemplated the probable funeral of the Man of Money, and never once winced at the thought of the sable feathers. Let the reader judge.

Almost at the exact time that Basil Pennibacker fled in sorrow and confusion from the door of Carraways, Commissioner Thrush knocked at the postern of Solomon Jericho. And had Jericho's household gods been as anxious, waking, instead—as we fear it too often happens with household gods in general—instead of sleeping, like pet spaniels at the fire-side, sure we are that the chimney deities would have given a sympathetic shriek, or howl, or cry, or squall—hearing murder's messenger at the door. "Is Mr. Jericho within ?" asked the assistant homicide with a serene gravity worthy of the coming funeral. The victim was at home. The undertaker might walk up stairs ; and making due allowance, might measure the living customer. And all this time, though the household gods might see in the burning embers, the splendid funeral of their master prefigured in glowing rays, with—if it further pleased them—a view, between the second and third bar, of the widow weeping over a pyramidal monument, weeping in a cloud of veil, with streaming wisp of handkerchief,—although every part and piece of this alarming spectacle were to be seen in the live coals of Jericho's hearth, nevertheless Jericho's household gods took no more account of the show than if it were a congregation of burning vapours brought together to roast the family goose, or cook the family mutton.

Commissioner Thrush walks placidly up to Mr. Jericho, and offers him his hand. And Jericho takes the palm in his own, never dreaming that, probably, he grasped a piece of churchyard clod.

"Though I come upon an unpleasant business, my dear sir—by the way I think you get thinner and thinner," said Thrush.

"I believe Commissioner," said Jericho very austerely, "I believe in polite society, a man's flesh is silently permitted to be quite a matter for his own contemplation."

"Mr. Jericho, I am corrected, and very properly. A thousand pardons. I bring this from my friend Colonel Bones," and fixing his eye like a snake upon Jericho, Thrush discharged a letter upon him.

Jericho read the letter. With a stony face of contempt he looked down upon it. "This is quite ridiculous," said Jericho.

"It may be droll, devilish droll," said Thrush. "Men differ so in their tastes. You may think a challenge a joke; may, indeed, think pistols when they click, merely *diseurs de bons mots.* Every man as he likes."

"You do not intend to say, Commissioner Thrush, that this Colonel Bones—this gingerbread hero—this"—

"Colonel Bones is my friend," said Thrush. "Colonel Bones has served her Majesty: at least, if not her Majesty, her Majesty's uncle. It's all in the family; just the same thing. You insulted the Colonel."

"The fact is"—Jericho paused, but only one instant, for a lie—"The fact is, the day was hot; I had drunk too much"—

"I am sorry to hear it. For now it is impossible to accommodate matters. Now, sir, the Colonel must be a charcoal-burner; you must taste his saltpetre," and Thrush smacked his lips, as recommending its flavour.

"Impossible to accommodate! When it was abuse in a moment of wine," cried Jericho.

"Sir, an offence committed in wine must be between intimates a double offence; and for this reason; this iron-bound reason. It implies long-smouldering malice," cried Thrush.

"I don't see that," exclaimed Jericho, becoming interested in the question. "How do you prove it?"

"You shall hear, sir, in a very few words; and those, the very words of my late excellent and sagacious friend, the king of Siam."

"I don't see," cried Jericho, "that the king of Siam"—

"If you please; one moment," said Thrush, with mild authority. "'Drunkards,' his majesty would say, 'are of two sorts. The good-natured and the malicious. Now, the good-natured man in his drink babbles his praises and his affections; and with all his goodness would blush when sober to say the loving things that run from him in his wine. His sober thoughts are written in his heart in the milk of human goodness. Now, the malicious man, who in his steady hours, has kept a fair face and a clean lip to his fellow—in his time of drink talks reviling and abuse. His thoughts are written not in milk, but in vinegar: but the fire of the wine brings out either character, showing both true, the words of milk and the words of verjuice.' Now, this, sir, was the judgment of the king of Siam."

"I—I do not see it. I can't see it. Ridiculous! Preposterous," cried Jericho.

"The king of Siam though in his royal tomb, and sprinkled with the loving ashes of fifty of his wives burnt at a great expense for that occasion only—the king of Siam," said Thrush with ominous gravity, "is still my friend. When we have disposed of our present business, I shall be happy to give the readiest attention to any disparagement you may feel disposed to vent upon the lamented potentate."

"I am not at all the man, sir, to do anything of the sort," cried Jericho. "I respect the — the — yes, the constituted authorities, in their tombs or out of 'em."

"I am very happy to hear it. Because you must at once concede, on the authority of my friend, the king, that an affront in drink is a double insult. You called my friend, Colonel Bones, an officer her Majesty's uncle's service"—

Jericho who, though he trod upon thorns, could not resist the sneer, asked, "What regiment?"

"No matter, sir," said Thrush, "I have forgotten it. The Colonel himself may have forgotten it. Any regiment you like. The 59th Harlequins, or the 74th Pantaloons—it is no matter. You have insulted an officer; it may be, insulted him for years. You called him toad-eater—pauper—bone-picker! Now, sir, who shall say how long you may have carried about you those opprobrious epithets, written in the strongest vinegar upon your heart? Written, and only waiting the required volume of hot, fruity port, to dawn and break out into diabolic blackness? At length you drink; you become drunk; and thereupon immediately publish to the world the calumny writ in withering acid." Jericho was astonished. Thrush, wiping his forehead after the exertion, dropt his voice, and in the politest, meekest manner, asked, "To whom will you do me the honour to refer me? Who is your friend?"

"Certainly; to be sure," said Jericho with alacrity; and he immediately sat down, and penned a note to the Hon. Cesar Candituft. With what a halo of benevolence was that good creature immediately surrounded! With something of a smile at his lip, Jericho penned a few familiar lines. "He would leave the matter entirely in his hands." This done, he handed the missive to Thrush, who took it with the satisfied air of a man who felt that he was proceeding in a manner most satisfactory to the feelings of all parties.

"Good morning, Mr. Jericho, this little affair — end as it may —will, I trust, make no alteration in our intimacy. I give you my word of honour, so impartial am I in this matter—so little personal feeling have I mixed up in this business, that had you instead of the Colonel called upon me, I should have had equal pleasure in attending upon yourself."

"You are very good, very good," said Jericho very icily.

"Not at all. I consider that in going out with any man, I merely fulfil a great social duty, and think upon that account I have an equal claim — should the occasion fall — upon equal services from any of my fellow-creatures. Dear sir, good morning." And Thrush went his way.

It may seem odd, when we aver that Jericho sat in the completest state of ease. He was never more tranquil, and for this reason, — he was profoundly secure in the friendship, the sweet humanity, of Candituft. *He*, he an accomplice to draw him into a duel! That noble fellow would rather meet the ball himself. Besides, he recollected—and very much soothed was he by the recollection — that Candituft abhorred duelling. He had heard him denounce the practice as murderous, fratricidal. "A duellist!" Candituft would say,—"A duellist is only Cain in higher life." Very much comforted was Jericho with this sweet philanthropic sentence. Again and again did he speak it to himself: pass the beautiful words one by one before his moral vision, as a girl admires bead by bead a new necklace.

Only half-an-hour had passed, and Candituft was announced. "A duellist is only Cain in high life," thought Jericho triumphantly, as he rose to press the hand of his friend.

"Dear, good sir," said Candituft, "I am delighted to see you look so happy. Yes; it is a moment like this that shows the true man. That proves the constitutional serenity of his soul. That shows him ready, if it must be, at the call of honour—ready to quit life when life has its best blandishments—ready to leave the flowery path of wealth and prosperity, and to descend into the cold and comfortless tomb. The friendship of such a man makes me proud indeed;" and Candituft shook Jericho's hand.

"Tomb! What do you mean by tomb?" cried Jericho. "Don't talk to me of tombs."

"Of course, my dear friend, only as a figure of speech. Goodness forbid anything graver," said Candituft.

"You have seen that Thrush?" asked Jericho, trying to be careless.

"I met him as I was coming here. An unpleasant business.

But I've settled matters, I think, very comfortably," said Candituft.

"I knew you would. My best of friends!" cried Jericho, clapping Candituft on the shoulder.

"My friend's honour is as dear—I don't know if it isn't dearer—than my own. You were quite safe in my hands." Here Candituft pulled out his pocket-handkerchief, used it with considerable vigour; and after a seemly pause, said, "We fight at eight."

"Eight!" shrieked Jericho, and he leaped as though already struck by the bullet.

"Everything is settled quite according to routine, and we'll take a light, early dinner, and"—

"And do you mean, sir," exclaimed Jericho, "to call yourself my friend, and want me to fight?"

"I do assure you, my dear sir, it is the most touching proof of—I will not stop at friendship—I will say, of affection. Yes, sir, brotherly affection," said Candituft, a little moved by a sample of the emotion.

"Why, sir, I have heard you call duelling murder! Have you not?" cried Jericho.

Candituft was instantly explicit. "Murder it is, sir."

"Fratricide!" exclaimed Jericho.

"There can be no doubt of it: slaughter carried among the brotherhood of man."

At length Jericho came to the clenching sentence.—"Have you not called a duellist, Cain in high life?"

"Very true, my dear sir. But if Cain is admitted into the circles, it is not for us to object to his introduction. I trust, sir, that I love my fellow-creatures. I hope I know what is due to the family of man; nevertheless I can't be expected to give up my place in society, from the mere weakness of affection."

"Seriously, Mr. Candituft," asked Jericho, "do you expect me to fight Colonel Bones?"

"You placed yourself in my hands, my very dear sir—and though I should lament any fatal issue on your side—when I say lament it, I feel 'twould blight my future existence—nevertheless, as my friend, and as a man in society, as a man owing to the world the efficacy of high example, you must fight." Thus judged the Hon. Cesar Candituft.

"But I won't fight," exclaimed Jericho. "Fighting isn't in my way."

Candituft merely observed—"Kicking may be." Jericho drew himself up. "Pardon me, my dear friend—I"—Candituft struggled with his feelings; at length, he fell upon Jericho's neck, and in an agony of friendship exclaimed—"Worthiest of beings! Best of creatures! You must fight!"

Jericho was a little subdued by such devotion.—"You really think I must fight?"

"Do you think," said Candituft, "that the Duke of St. George would suffer a man who refused a challenge to sully the door-step of Red Dragon House? Noblest of men as he is, and kindest of the human race, he would feel it to be his duty to spit upon you. Metaphorically, my dear friend, of course."

"You are right," said Jericho, giving his courage a wrench—"I will fight."

"I knew it"—and Candituft seized Jericho's hand between his own—"I was sure of it."

"At eight you say? And where"—Jericho felt a little dizzy—"where the place?"

"The best, the noblest, the most heroic spot," said Candituft. "Battersea-Fields, of course."

"Hm! I thought Wimbledon was more genteel?" observed Jericho, wanderingly.

"It was: but surely, my dear sir, you can't forget. The Duke himself—the immortal Wellington, has thrown an undying lustre upon Battersea-Fields."

"I recollect," said Jericho. "Of course—to be sure he has."

"Such being the case, I suffer no friend of mine to receive any man's fire on any meaner ground. For my own part, I have always considered Battersea-Fields, as a sort of battle-field-of-ease to Waterloo. Possibly, my dear friend, the same thought may have struck you?"

"I can't say that it has"—replied Jericho—"but I shall remember it for the future no doubt."

"And now, my dear Solomon"—Jericho winced at the affectionate familiarity; there sounded in it a raven note—"my dear friend, you may have a few matters to settle? You may have to speak to Mrs. Jericho"—

"Why, I mus'n't tell her of it?" asked Jericho.

"Not for ten thousand worlds; it would spoil all. We know what women are, dear creatures! They smell powder, and they scream police." Mr. Jericho never felt a warmer admiration of the wisdom of the sex. "Not a word to Mrs. Jericho. Nevertheless, you may manage indirectly to convey certain wishes. I've said enough. Adieu; I'll not fail at seven, to the minute. Good-bye," and the friend and philanthropist took an affectionate leave.

Ever since Mr. Candituft had blown the praises of Doctor Dodo, Mrs. Jericho, like an earnest and affectionate wife, wished to introduce him to her husband: even though by stratagem. Responsive to the lady's call, the Doctor came to the house; arriving some half-hour before the return of Candituft. After a brief, confidential gossip, the Doctor suggested that Mrs. Jericho should introduce him as called in by herself. She had the vapours; was nervous; failing in appetite. Happily, an excuse could never be wanted by a fine lady for a physician. Fortunately, Mr. Jericho—anxiously seeking his wife, to give some indirect council ere Candituft should return—came upon the doctor in consultation with the lady. "My dear," said Mrs. Jericho, "Doctor Dodo. I have called him about my horrid nerves."

"Why, what's the matter with them? I never heard that anything ailed them. Nevertheless, I'm very happy to see Doctor Dodo. Surely, a friend of Mr. Candituft's?" said Jericho.

"We are very old friends, very old," said the Doctor, and he took hold of Jericho's hand, treating it to a somewhat prolonged shake.

"Don't let me hurry you, my dear," said Jericho, about to retire. "I shall be in the library. Doctor Dodo, I shall be very happy to make your acquaintance. Very happy;" and Jericho walked restlessly to the window.

Doctor Dodo shook his head, saying in a whisper, "Mr. Jericho must be seen to, dear madam. His appetite is not good?"

"Excellent," whispered Mrs. Jericho, with emphasis.

"It looks a decided case of—however, we shall see. Pulse, very extraordinary—very extraordinary," said the Doctor.

"Doctor Dodo, will you take a short notice," said Mrs. Jericho, aloud, "and in a homely sort dine with us to-day?"

"I dine out, my dear," said Jericho: "dine at the Club with Candituft, and"—a deep, sepulchral knock shook the door—"and here he is to fetch me."

Candituft was delighted to see Doctor Dodo. The very man whom he wanted to meet. Perhaps, in the Doctor's way, he would set Jericho and himself, Candituft, down at the Club. It was exactly in the Doctor's drive, and he would be only too happy. "Come along, dear sir," said Candituft to Jericho significantly, "or they may wait dinner for us."

"Good-bye, Sabilla, my love," said Jericho, and squeezed his wife's hand a little to his wife's astonishment.

"And now, Doctor," said Candituft, when the three were in the carriage, "your work is over for the day. You must oblige us with a drive—we have a little call to make; therefore, allow me to direct the coachman. After our call—we sha'n't be long—we'll all dine together."

Doctor Dodo was the most polite of men. He at once acceded to the request; and the coachman, guided by Candituft, at eight precisely, drove on Battersea-Fields. "Eh!" cried the Doctor —"What! I smell powder!"

"And there's the game," cried Candituft, and he pointed to Colonel Bones and Thrush who had just alighted from a cab, driven to the field by the unconscious Bob Topps.

"This is not fair, Mr. Candituft. You've entrapped me here; I shall not stop," said the Doctor.

"Nay, only five minutes, for Mrs. Jericho's sake," said Candituft. "You may be needful, Doctor."

"I can be of no use, none whatever. You'll please to remember, I'm a physician, not a surgeon. However, as I'm here, if you'll use dispatch"—and the Doctor looked at his watch—"I'll see the business through."

"Thank you—a thousand thanks," said Candituft, and immediately he and Thrush conferred. The parties came to fight—not to explain: the seconds ruled that. Whereupon, the men were immediately placed. Candituft looked at them with an eye of admiration; saying to himself,—"I think, as near as possible, precisely on the Duke's own ground."

All ready. Colonel Bones, with a grunt and a grin, fires at the signal. His ball goes clean through Jericho's bosom, knocking off a button in its passage, and striking itself flat against a pile of bricks.

"A dead man!" cried the Doctor, running to Jericho.

"My friend!" exclaimed Candituft. "Have you made your will?"

"Eh! what's the matter?" said Jericho.

"Matter!" exclaimed Doctor Dodo, and he pointed his cane to the hole in front of Jericho's coat, immediately over the region of his heart; and then, walking round him, stared at the hole between the fourth and fifth rib. "Matter! It's the first time I ever heard a man with a bullet clean through his heart, ask—what's the matter!"

"I'm blessed if here ain't the ball, as flat as a penny, with the waddin about it," cried Bob Topps, picking up the lead.

"What! Eh? Why, gentlemen," said the Doctor, taking the ball, and peeling from it the fragments of paper—"are you so rich that you wad with bank-notes?"

The Colonel's ball had passed through Jericho's bank-note-paper heart; and Jericho lived and moved, and was none the worse for it. Jericho fired in the air; whereupon the Colonel and Thrush, with a strange leer at him, avowed themselves more than satisfied. Jericho declared the whole matter to be a good joke, and was about to enter the Doctor's carriage. "I beg your pardon, sir," said the Doctor, " but no man, or devil, or whatever he may be, rides in my carriage, who can live with a hole through his heart." And the Doctor jumped inside, shouted " home," and was whirled from the ground.

Neither Thrush nor Bones cared to ride back ; indeed, they proposed to walk. Whereupon, Jericho beckoned to Topps— " Not if you'd turn these fields into gold and give 'em me," cried Bob ; and he jumped on his box, and drove away.

" Dev'lish impudent fellow," said Jericho to Candituft : but Candituft made no answer. He cared not to talk even to the Man of Money, the money having a hole in its heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

The ball that went through Jericho's heart, killed Doctor Dodo's reputation. The Doctor was one of those stiff-necked men who will believe their own senses in opposition to their own interests. He was signally punished for his obstinacy ; and, we trust, will stand pilloried in these pages as an instructive example of misfortune, bigoted to a faith in its own eyes, ears, and understanding. Why—with a wife and increasing family hanging at his coat pockets,—why would Doctor Dodo, in defiance of the world, insist upon enjoying his own convictions ? How many men have been ruined by the extravagance ; nevertheless, headlong simplicity will not take warning !

Doctor Dodo declared that he had been inveigled to the ground —the Battersea Waterloo—and therefore was under no professional pledge of silence. Again, the gun-shot wound enjoyed by Jericho—as Dodo sneeringly phrased it—was so extraordinary, so marvellous, seeing that the man was no worse for it—that, with trumpet voice, the case must sound an alarm to the whole profession. If men were to live with holes in their hearts, there was an end of the delicate mystery of anatomy. Man became no jot more dignified than polypus.

" I tell you, Doctor Stubbs, a hole clean through the fellow's heart," cried Dodo to a brother physician, who, with finger and thumb dreamily fondling the tip of his nose, looked askance at the heated narrator. Dodo fired at the look of doubt, and bellowed, " I tell you clean—clean ! If the ball had passed through a crumpet, it couldn't have gone cleaner."

" And the—the man walked from the ground ? " said Stubbs with wary look and voice.

"Never felt it," said Dodo. "Walked away, Stubbs; strode off like an ostrich."

"Hm!" said Stubbs; and the good fellow thought of Dodo's large family with friendly concern. "Hm! And was there much hemorrhage?"

"None, none, Stubbs: no more than if you'd fired through a pancake," exclaimed Dodo.

"You couldn't"—Stubbs spoke very tenderly—"You couldn't be mistaken, my dear Dodo? It *was* the heart?"

The blood rushed to Dodo's face, choking his speech. Giving a violent jerk at his neckcloth, then sternly composing himself, Doctor Dodo gave the following testimony solemnly, as though the honour of a life depended on it:—"My dear sir—Doctor Stubbs—I am not a man to joke, sir; I defy my worst enemy to say that. Well, sir, upon my professional reputation, Colonel Bones's bullet went through the left ventricle of Jericho's heart."

"Dear me! very odd—very odd! Of course, if you aver this"——

"Aver it! I saw the wound; the hole, Doctor Stubbs, the hole. I say it! On my professional reputation, standing before Jericho, I saw through him. As I am a gentleman, I saw the setting sun through his fourth and fifth ribs."

"Very strange," said Stubbs, in the kindest, most conciliating way. "What do you think of it?"

"Think! Why, when I saw the man walk away; when I know that he is now as well as ever; what must I think—averse as I am from all such notions—what must I think but that Jericho has sold himself to the devil? What do you smile at, Doctor Stubbs?" cried Dodo, angrily.

"I couldn't have thought you believed in such bargains," said Stubbs, gently. "Besides, whatever may have happened in the dark times, we mus'n't believe in such transactions now-a-days. Political economy forbids it."

"I don't see; I don't see," cried Dodo. "I say, sold himself to the devil; and why not?"

"Why, my dear Dodo, you see we must concede that supply is ruled by demand, and"—and Stubbs thought to pacify Dodo—"and between ourselves—if half we hear be true, I think the devil must have his hands full. And so, my good friend, take my advice; say nothing about the matter."

"What!" cried Dodo, "close my eyes—shut my mouth? Not out of my grave, Doctor Stubbs; certainly not. I know you're a prudent man, with a reverence for the world, and so forth. But for myself—as I say—not out of my grave. No, no; not out of my grave," and with a smile and a waive of the hand that said—" Doctor Stubbs, you're a pitiful fellow," Dodo strode from his mean adviser.

Colonel Bones—it was at the Cutancome Club that the Doctors met—dropt in a few minutes after the departure of Dodo ; five minutes after, came Commissioner Thrush. It was plain from the strange looks of the men that there was a dark secret between them. Bones lifted his eyebrows ; Thrush upraised his. Bones drew his mouth into a small significant hole ; Thrush puckered his lips to a point. Bones threw up his hands ; Thrush, with shaking palms, responded to the gesture. And then Bones and Thrush seated themselves at the opposite sides of a table ; and squaring their elbows upon the board, looked silently in one another's faces.

" Hm ? " cried Bones, after a pause. " Hm ? Ever seen anything like it in Siam ? "

" Who could have thought it ! " cried Thrush. " Who could believe the devil such a fool—such an ass ? "

" After all, Commissioner, it's long been my opinion that the devil is a fool. We've flatter'd him too much ; thought too highly of him. The devil's a nincompoop. Hm ? " said Bones.

" He must be ; or could he ever have bought such a penn'orth as Jericho ? " asked Thrush.

" Vulgar notion, Commissioner. The devil buys nobody : folks when they've a mind to it, give themselves away. The wonder is, some of 'em are taken even at a gift. Hm ? "

" Wrong, Colonel, wrong ; I'm certain of it, the devil's a liberal, punctual dealer in the market, and when he buys outright, pays ready money for his goods. I wonder how much he's given for Jericho ? Who'd have thought that Doctor Faustus should come up again in our time ! That hole in his heart accounts for the money in his pocket. Colonel Bones,"—cried Thrush, with sudden solemnity.

" Commissioner Thrush," said Bones, sonorously responding.

" We owe a duty to society. We must expose this fiend," exclaimed Thrush, rapping the table.

" Strip him to the world," coincided Bones, " that the world may see through him. Hm ? "

" Tear the demon from his gilded temple," cried Thrush, eloquent in his indignation, "and appal mankind with the hideousness of wicked wealth."

" Beautiful ! Hm ?" and Bones rubbed his hands, pleased with promised sport.

" Nevertheless, Colonel, let us proceed regularly, respectably. I have turned the matter over ; and I think our best line of action is this.—Is this," and Thrush, gathering himself to the table, brought his forefinger to his nose, to steady his opinion. "We will call upon the rector of the demon's parish."

"Hm?" said Bones, doubtingly. "Well, if you think so."

"We will inform him of the existence of the fiend your bullet has discovered"—Thrush paused.

"Very good," cried Bones, encouragingly. "Very proper—if you think so."

"The rector will then lay the matter before the bishop of his diocese"—Thrush again paused.

"Excellent; quite according to discipline," said Bones, "and what then? Hm? What then?"

"Why, then," continued Thrush with an awful expression of face, "why then, the bishop—I have no doubt of it, whatever—the bishop will, with his pastoral grasp, seize upon Jericho, and haul him into the ecclesiastical court."

The fierce, grim, cannibal look of the colonel was softened into compassion. "Poor devil!" said Bones.

"There is no help for it," cried Thrush, with the air of a man determined upon making a sacrifice in no way distressing to himself. "No help for it. Perhaps, it is not agreeable to be mixed up with such a matter. It is certainly not pleasant to go down to posterity in company with a demon. Nevertheless, we owe a debt to society. Therefore, we will first obtain the attestation of Doctor Dodo, and so assured, proceed to Doctor Cummin of St. Shekels. Man owes two solemn debts; one to society, and one to nature. It is only when he pays the second, that he covers the first."

"Beautiful! Hm?" said Bones.

"My dear fellows," said Stubbs, joining the two friends vowed to the destruction of the demon Jericho, "have you seen Dodo lately?"

"Saw him last night, didn't we?" answered Thrush, with a wink, to Bones.

"I may speak to both of you confidentially," observed Stubbs in trustful tone. "I believe we all have a regard for poor Dodo: an excellent fellow—will talk, that's the worst. Has no stopper to his mouth; what rises from his heart will run out at his lips, that's his misfortune, poor fellow! but—well, well,—we all have our faults. Now, I want to ask you"—and Stubbs, looking about him, lowered his voice—"I want to ask, have you observed anything odd about Dodo? Anything at all flighty?—you know what I mean."

"Why, upon my word"—said Thrush, dragging out the syllables, and then pausing.

"He has a large family; I may say, a sweet family. An excellent wife, too. But, poor fellow! he has not had time to be rich, and I hope—yes, I do hope," said Stubbs, emphatic, "that the brain's all right."

"What! Cracked?" cried Bones. "Does it ring as if cracked—hm?"

"This is in the closest confidence," again urged Stubbs; "but I assure you that, for half-an-hour, Dodo would insist upon it that a man—it would be unjust, ungenerous, to mention his name, but a man of unbounded wealth and equal honour—had received a bullet through the left ventricle, you understand, of his heart; and that the man was still alive. And this," Dodo said, "he had witnessed; had seen the sunset through the perforation. And still alive!"

Bones slowly rubbed his hands.

"Well?" said Thrush, coldly.

"Well!" cried Stubbs. "My dear sir, when a man makes such an avowal, we know that the brain—for the time, at least—is gone. And when, moreover, the man happens to be a physician, why then"—and the Doctor, in despair of utterance big enough to express the result, took a pinch of snuff.

At this moment Doctor Mizzlemist joined the party. "Seen Dodo lately?" said he, looking mysterious. "Very odd. I suppose he means it as a joke; but jokes are not exactly the things for physicians; indeed, not for any man who'd ride in his carriage. Jokes are the luxury of beggars; men of substance can't afford 'em."

"Very true, Doctor," said Stubbs, nodding serious affirmation.

"Must be mad, I think," said Mizzlemist. "Going all about the town, swearing that he saw a man shot through the heart, and the man walk from the ground. Why, his diploma isn't worth so much ass's-skin. Who'd employ such a physician? Now, this is Dodo's dilemma—law, insanity, poverty; the prongs of the caudine fork—if I haven't forgotten my classics," and Mizzlemist extended his three fingers.

"What do you mean? And only for saying a man was shot?" stammered Thrush, "what do you mean?"

"In the first place"—and Mizzlemist smacked his lips—"there is libel, inasmuch as to assert that a man lives with a bullet-hole in his heart, in the opinion of every sound lawyer implies a diabolical compact."

"Good," cried Stubbs, much satisfied.

"Secondly, if the physician escape libel, he is open to a writ *de lunatico*," said Mizzlemist, his voice cheerfully rising.

"There can be no doubt of it," averred Stubbs.

"Thirdly, if he get clear of libel, and, more extraordinary still, escape a lunatic jury, why, the physician's practice is gone—dead as a fly in his own ointment."

"Physicians don't keep ointment," said Stubbs, with dignity. "We prescribe—simply."

"His practice is gone," repeated Mizzlemist, "and then, if he's not made his fortune, then"—and Mizzlemist rolled the verdict over his tongue,—"then there is poverty, emphatic poverty. And so, as friends of Dr. Dodo, give him a hint, do. Are you going westward, Stubbs? I see your wheels are at the door. Can you give me a trundle?"

"With pleasure," and Stubbs and Mizzlemist straightway departed.

"You did not see the hole yourself, Colonel?" asked Thrush, with contemplative face.

"Why, no. I was the last person to look at it, you know. Hm?" cried Bones.

"I wish I had had a peep. Would have been more satisfactory—much more," said Thrush, puzzled.

"I saw no blood; and I was near enough to see that. Hm?" and Bones nibbled his thumb-nail.

"After all," and Thrush spoke like a man of amended judgment, "after all, it must be Dodo's joke, or if not"—and Thrush pointed expressively at his own forehead, "poor fellow! A large family, too. At all events, we cannot be too prudent. And so, till we hear more, I think we will postpone our call upon Doctor Cummin."

"I must say I wouldn't trouble either him or the bishop without better grounds. For my part I think there must be a mistake. And then there's libel, and lunacy, and—though I've nothing to lose—there's poverty, and—upon my word"—and Bones seemed fixed in the opinion—"I think we had better hold our peace."

"I think so too," cried Thrush, very readily. "For I recollect it was a saying of the King of Siam's, that the giant Whapperwo, who with his little finger could level stone walls, was at last knocked down by his own tongue."

"Very strange," said Bones, opening a letter—one of two brought by the servant. "Jericho, I suppose to show he bears no malice, asks me to dinner."

"It is odd," answered Thrush, reading the twin missive; "but here, too, he asks me. This looks like conscious innocence. Dodo must be jesting, or must be mad."

"At all events, we'll go—hm?—I say we'll go"—Thrush bowed assent—"if only to look about us. Nevertheless, I must say that I am anxious for Dodo—anxious for his wife—anxious for his family. Hm ?"

And Rumour blew upon the hole in Jericho's heart—blew as through a brazen trumpet—making many modulations. We have heard her at the luxurious Cutancome. Let us listen to her at the Horse and Anchor, frequented by Bob Topps, whose simplicity and goodnature had made him a sudden favourite with the rugged charioteers who drank and baited at the hostelry. "What's your fare, Bob ?" a cabman wag would ask, playfully satirical on Robert's innocence, "what's your fare, now, from the first of April to Jerusalem ?" Another, in the like vein would demand of Bob "how much he'd take to drive over Lady-day, and set down clear of the water-rate ?" And Bob gave and took in the best of humour, and in a few days, with the help of ale—the liberal "footing" of a beginner—commanded, when he would, an attentive audience. And Bob told the story of the duel from the beginning to pleased listeners. When, however, he came to the hole in the duellist's heart, the duellist still alive, he met with boisterous unbelief.

"Upon my word and honour, gentlemen"—said Bob earnestly—"I picked the bullet up myself; and it was as flat—as flat as any shilling. It had gone clean through him."

"And him as it hit," asked one of the audience, "was still alive ?"

"Alive! Why, I tell you, he wanted me to drive him home. But, no, no, says I. In course not: I wasn't goin' to pison my cab, and a new 'un, too, with brimstone," said Bob sagaciously.

"Well, if that lie isn't enough to take one's wheel off," said an old man, holding Bob's ale-pot in his hand; and then winking at the donor, and taking a long, deep draught to right himself.

"A hole right through him, eh ?" said another, a grave jester. "Why didn't you thread him with your whip, like a herrin' through the gills ? There's a song that talks o' hollow hearts, but I 'spose the song don't mean hearts with holes in 'em like grindstones."

"You may say what you like," cried Bob, "I know the man; I saw the light twinkling through him—and more than that, his name's Jericho."

"What! the rich man that they're always talking about in the paper ? The man that's buying everything ? The man that's goin' to have gold scrapers at his door, and lion's head knockers cut out o' diamonds ? You're a good fellow, Bob, though you know no more of the fares of town than the Babies in the Wood,—still you're a good fellow, and I wouldn't see you hurt. So you'd better say nothin' aginst such folks as Mr. Jericho. Why, what are you to such as him? He'd put you into the Court of Chancery for scandal, and none of your dearest friends—not even the wife o' your bosom with the biggest telescope as ever was, would ever be able to see a bit of you agin. Do mind what you're about," and the philosopher and friend pulled at the ale.

"Don't tell me," cried Bob; "*that* Jericho—oh, there's something precious wrong there! A man can't live with a hole in his heart, and the devil know nothin' about it."

A pelting shower came on; there was a sudden demand for cabs, and all Bob's audience were speedily on their several boxes. He alone sat in the tap-room, pensive and puzzled.

"My good lad," said the landlord of the Horse and Anchor, addressing Bob with considerable kindness—"my good lad, I like you, but take my advice—don't give your mind to lying. A lie may do very well for a time; but like a bad shilling, it's found out at last—it is, upon my word and honour. Still, if you must lie—if you can't help it—tell lies about them as is your equals; don't lie agin them that has money enough to eat you. Without salt!" added, in the way of exclamation, the Horse and Anchor.

"Breeks, my dear, I've long been sure of it, though I never said anything about it."—

(The hole in the heart, reader, is now discussed beneath the roof-tree of Breeks, Jericho's tailor; Mrs. Breeks much outraged in her feelings that her husband will continue to make for that serpent.)

"I never spoke—I never do 'till I'm forced—but as true as I wear a wedding-ring, I always used to feel hot and cold shivers when you came from measuring that creature. And some day, some twelve o'clock at night, take my word for it, he'll be carried off in a red-hot chariot, with your clothes upon him."

"Should be sorry, Julia, to lose so good a customer. To be sure, Mr. Jericho is not the man he was"—said Breeks.

"Man! There's no doubt of it, he's sold himself to Beelzebub, and given a stamped receipt in his own blood for the money. Else I should like to know how a man could live with a hole in his heart."

"It's nothin' whatever,"—said Breeks—"easily enough."

"Breeks, you're getting quite a heathen, and for the sake of the dear children, I won't live with you," pouted Mrs. Breeks.

"See, Julia, what a hole your eyes once made in my heart," cried the flattering tailor.

"Quite another sort of thing. Holes of that sort ar'n't supposed to kill;" and the wife proudly smiled.

"No: they certainly do heal, and don't leave so much as a scar behind. Time does fine-draw 'em wonderful. But don't believe it, Julia; certainly Mr. Jericho isn't the man he was: he's thin to a wonder, and solemn to match. And once he was so lusty and so droll. To be sure, then he never paid, and so took any joke. Do you recollect once when I made him a whole suit, without a single pocket? 'Why Breeks,'—says he—'why, there's never a pocket; not a single pocket.' 'I know that,' says I. 'I made the suit so a purpose.' 'Why so?' says he. 'Why,' says I, 'Mr. Jericho, whenever I ask you for money, you say you never by no means have so much as a shillin'. Now, when a man never has money, what's the use of pockets? I wouldn't any longer hurt your feelins to make 'em.' Law! how he laughed: never laughs now,—but in return, what a jewel of a paymaster!"

"Paymaster! And how do you know where his money comes from? I shouldn't wonder if *his* money in partic'lar isn't after all—as Mr. Jabez Spikenard says of all money—so much dust and ashes."

"I can't say," answered Breeks; "all I know is, you very soon turn it into mutton and tatoes. And as for the hole that's talked of—if Mr. Jericho's heart had as many holes as a cullender, you'll be good enough to wink at 'em."

"What! be blind to wickedness! I never was in all my life, Breeks, not even afore I listened to Mr. Spikenard, and it isn't likely I'm going to shut my eyes now. I'll learn all about this hole of Satan's make, depend upon it: I'll give all the partic'lars to dear Mr. Spikenard, and won't he make a discourse on it that'll drag the hearts out of the very charity children! I *will*, Breeks," averred the wife.

"I'm sorry to hear it, Julia: because, I did intend to give you a new cherry-coloured satin. You look well—'xtremely well in cherry-colour, Julia. Yes: I had made my mind up to a new gown."

"And what's to baulk a blessed intention, Breeks?" asked Julia.

"Why, I'd put aside the money from a bill of Mr. Jericho's. And only to think, if when you was at chapel, the cherry-coloured satin should turn upon your very back to sackcloth and ashes!"

"Breeks, my love," said the wife with sudden energy, "I'll risk it."

"Mr. Jericho"—said the tailor—"is shamefully abused. 'Cause they can't find a hole in his coat, they pick one in his heart. See, too, what we owe him! Any other man, when he got rich, would have left the tailor of his struggling years; would have cut him off like an end o' thread,—and gone to the west. Has Mr. Jericho done so?"

"He hasn't, love," said Mrs. Breeks, melting.

"Has money made any difference in him—'xcept this? Afore he never paid, and now he does?"

"It's a sweet truth," cried the wife, continuing to soften.

"And as for this talk about the hole—it's a venomous falsehood. Besides, what is it to us?"

"What, indeed?" exclaimed Mrs. Breeks.

"He pays his way like a prince—I only wish all princes paid like him,"—cried the emphatic Breeks—"'twould be better for some tailors. And are we to see a hole in such a customer's heart? Not if the sun and moon and all the stars was shining through him. But I don't believe it. No: it's a wicked scandal."

"Backbiters, as Mr. Spikenard says, are like locusts; they love to feed upon the fat of the land. They've no doubt bit the hole; nobody else. Yes, my love; you've made me quite happy; quite restored my confidence in our customer. I shall be proud to wear a gown out of his money; it will show I don't turn against him. And I think this time, love"—and Mrs. Breeks patted the face of her lord with kitten playfulness—"this time, not a cherry-colour: no, dearest; a crimson."

In Primrose Place the hole in the heart, played upon by the rapid lips of Mrs. Topps, had a various effect. Bessy was struck with fear and wonder; Bessy's mother thought there might be something in the story; and yet could not believe it: and Carraways laughed outright at the tale. "I assure you, father, Jenny seems quite shocked at the circumstance. Poor girl," said Bessy, "she will have it, something's going to happen."

"No doubt," laughed Carraways, "or how would the world go on? Come, tell us all about it, Jenny," said the old gentleman, as Mrs. Topps, with a staid grave face, crept from an inner room. "Mr. Jericho got a hole in his heart, eh?"

"Yes, sir; and everybody's wondering about it—for he's not dead, and not likely to be," said Jenny.

"And what do you think of it, Jenny? Come, speak out," said Carraways.

"Why, if you please sir, it isn't for such as me to think anything; still, I have heard of people selling themselves. I have heard that the—the—the"—

"The devil, eh Jenny?" said Carraways.

"If you please, sir," and Jenny curtsied. "That he walks about like a hungry lion to buy folks."

"And you think he's had a cheap penn'orth of Mr. Jericho, eh?"

"I didn't say that, sir," said Jenny; "still, everybody wonders how he's got so rich. He says it's a mine of metal. Folks say, a mine of brimstone. But this I know"—and Jenny encouraged, became voluble—"this I do know. A bullet went through Mr. Jericho's heart; and the lead was as flat as a plate, for Bob picked it up, and after that Jericho walked away. He wanted to ride; but Bob—bless him!—knew better than that. Oh yes!"

"And this is Bob's story, is it?" said Carraways, gravely. "Hm! I'm sorry to hear it. I'm afraid, Jenny, my good girl, I'm afraid Bob loves to drink."

"La, sir! No more than a baby," said Jenny.

"Just so," said Carraways.

"Besides, there was a doctor that handled the bullet—a lucky thing that, for dear Bob—and moreover, that saw through the hole in Mr. Jericho's breast—and more than that, that says he'll have Mr. Jericho afore the bishops, and put him in the Fantastical Court. And the doctor, by what I hear"—said Mrs. Topps, with burning face—"drinks no more than Robert."

"Well, Jenny, well," said Carraways, with a smile. "I like you to defend your husband. It's very natural; very proper. But the world, my good girl, can't and wont think as you do. I know a little, you'll allow, of Bob; and though I can speak from no absolute evidence, nevertheless, I have a suspicion that he has a liking for drink. If this be so, try and reform him."

"I will, sir," said Jenny, and the tears came into her eyes.

"I may be wrong: but watch him, and if need be, persuade him against so dreadful a vice."

"I will, sir, indeed I will," cried Jenny, weeping outright.

"I don't believe this story. Nobody will believe it. Everybody will take it as a drunkard's tale; therefore, warn Bob; warn him from me. There's a good girl."

"I will, sir; thank'ee, sir," and poor Jenny, with saddened heart, crept from Primrose Place, sorrowful for her weak and foolish husband. It was the first thin cloud that had crossed the honeymoon; and suddenly, the world had never looked so dark to Jenny.

The Hon. Cesar Candituft, on the night of the duel, went to bed in a state of grievous perplexity. There could be no doubt that the bullet had passed through Jericho. The man, it was horribly clear, held a supernatural tenure of existence. It was impossible to continue his friendship, for the mystery would be blown in all corners of the town. Impossible, too—or, at least, unsafe—to marry into such a family. Who was to know what infernal compact did, or did not exist among them? That he, Cesar, should have a bosom friend, so rich, with a hole in his heart!

Mr. Candituft, wearied by dreams in no way complimentary to Jericho, sat late at breakfast. The servant brought in a small packet. It was a letter from Mr. Jericho with a most magnificent diamond ring. "Wear this diamond, my dear Cesar," ran Jericho's missive, "as the type of a friendship, bright, unflawed, and everlasting." Candituft was a judge of diamonds. The stone was splendid; costly. As Cesar sat, gazing at the lustrous present, his heart melted in charitable emotions towards the donor; his brain sang thanksgiving. He rose, and approaching the window, in sweet luxurious idleness of feeling, tried the gem upon the glass. He wrote with diamond point:

> "Friendship, mysterious cement of the soul,
> I owe thee much."

"Very good," said Basil Pennibacker, looking over Cesar's shoulder, "but you hav'n't put down the amount."

"Mr. Pennibacker," exclaimed Candituft, "this is an honour that"—

"Don't name it. I've dropt in like a housebreaker upon you; but the fact is, by what I hear, blue fire's come into fashion again," said Basil.

"What can you possibly mean, dear Mr. Pennibacker?" asked Cesar, sweetly unconscious.

"Mr. Candituft"—said Basil—"you must be kind enough to explain a matter to me. Understand, I have no objection whatever to the sale of any gentleman to the—I wish to be guarded in my words—to the iniquitous principle. If people will take themselves to Horns-and-Tail Market, why, that's their affair. I may drop a buttermilk tear or so, as you would do, but I shouldn't think of holding 'em back. After all, sir, to speak plainly, it is said about town that my respected father-in-law, Mr. Solomon Jericho, has sold himself to the devil." Candituft started. "Have you any knowledge of the interesting transaction?"

"I! Mr. Basil Pennibacker!" exclaimed Candituft, his thoughts wandering and wounded.

"Understand," said Basil, very calmly: "pray, understand. I have no objection whatever to the sale on Mr. Jericho's personal account; only the world may think that the sulphur runs through the whole family."

"Surely, sir"—said Candituft—"surely you are in jest?"

"If my words were engrossed on parchment, with a fifty pound stamp to 'em, they couldn't be more serious. Last night, Mr. Jericho fought a duel? Battersea fields? You were his second? So far, I find I'm right. Well, sir, it is said that Colonel Bones fired a ball through the heart—how the ball found it out, I can't say—through the heart of Mr. Jericho."

Candituft dropped his eyelids—smiled—and shook his head.

"Is this true?" asked Basil. "Doctor Dodo swears it's true; but Dodo—some folks say—is a lunatic. Is it true that Jericho, with a hole through his heart, like a hole through a tailor's thimble, laughed at the thing as a good joke, and walked like a postman from the ground?"

"Mr. Pennibacker, in this world we light upon strange people"—

"What the monkey said"—cried Basil—"when he met his sweetheart in the Ark. Go on."

"Do you not perceive, Mr. Basil—is it not very strange—that a man of your extraordinary acumen does not discover this bullet to be—a—a metaphor?"

"I don't know," said Basil. "To be sure I have known metaphors of the like metal. But what do you mean? Where's the metaphor, when the world calls Mr. Jericho, the Man with a Hole in his Heart!"

"Ha! sir," cried Candituft, "it is saddening to a man who tries hard to love his species—to be compelled to hear such things. Malice! Envy! The cant of wicked poverty—nothing more. Because a man is rich, he must have no emotions; because his pocket is crammed, his heart must have a hole in it."

"Hm!" said Basil doubtfully.—"Well, I'm—yes, I'm satisfied."

And the hero, Cesar Candituft, glanced at his diamond, and said to himself—"So am I."

CHAPTER XIV.

Mr. Jericho was fully conscious of the malice of rumour. He well knew that he appeared before the world in a supernatural, perhaps, in a demoniacal light. The timidity, the tremors of Mrs. Jericho and her daughters, convinced him that they saw in husband and father, a man of most mysterious attributes. Monica, with all her strength of mind, turned pale at the smallest courtesy of her parent; and Agatha, suddenly meeting him on the staircase, squealed and ran away as from a fiend. "Mamma, dear mamma," she exclaimed in a moment of anxious tenderness, "I'm sure Mr. Jericho's sold; everybody says so—sold. If you love me, tell me now—does your night-light burn blue?" And though Mrs. Jericho very majestically rebuked the giddiness of her daughter, the wife in the deep, silent night—the shrunken Jericho fast asleep, screwed up in himself as you would twist a bank-note—the wife would feel the solemnity of her whereabout. "Should the buyer come,"—she thought while abed—and if folks could be arraigned for their thoughts, what goodly company would throng the bar!—"should the buyer come, I trust he'll know his own side."

Yet Jericho, from the first hour of his change, never felt so strong in himself; so insolently vigorous in mind and body. It was clear he should live for ever: he had been made immortal by money (not so uncommon a creed this). Death was to be awed like the human vulgar, and to pay respect to wealth. The principle of property was to flourish everlastingly in him, Solomon Jericho! True it was he continued to shrink — to waste. Nevertheless, he could not wholly disappear: he must have body, no matter for its tenuity. But that he was elevated beyond the anatomical accidents of common humanity, was plain from the ball that had passed through his heart, and he alive, without the loss of one drop of blood. To be sure the hole—for he had stood between two mirrors and seen through himself—the hole had an ugly look, but who was to know it? A secret to be easily kept, with proper caution, even from the wife of his bosom.

Therefore, Jericho despised the innuendoes, the hints that buzzed up and down the world—no more valued them than a cloud of summer gnats. And wherefore? He knew the way to confound and kill them. In the might and immortality of his money, he would bring back homage, flattery, devotion. He looked upon the world and its millions, as his palace — his subjects. He felt himself the elect of wealth — the chosen one designed to develop to the human race the enduring rule of cash. From such moment, there was to him nothing high, nothing great, nothing beautiful in humanity, — and for this reason, Jericho believed he could purchase it. In his moneyed eye, man in his noblest striving, woman in her holiest devotion, was ticketted and bore a price. Truth and virtue at the highest and best, were things for market: and Jericho scorned them,—because, when he would, he could destroy either commodity, by huckstering for it.

Jericho strong, stern in his power, had cast about him the most magnificent presents. He had sought occasion to bestow gifts of worth and beauty upon the merest acquaintance ; in all cases, contriving that the donation should harmonise with the taste — melodiously accord with the wish of the gifted. Jewels, pictures, horses, had Jericho—with more than imperial bounty—bestowed upon all sides. A week only after the duel, and Jericho had more than treble the number of his friends and champions. The Hole in the Heart, in the eye of Jericho's world had gradually closed ; and the heart was nobler, better, truer, kindlier than ever.

Mrs. Jericho was soon sweetly comforted by the enthusiasm of crowds of dear friends for her magnificent husband. She ought, indeed to be a happy woman, possessing such a man. Whereupon, Mrs. Jericho, with the slightest touch of remorse for past ingenuous thoughts, owned he was the best of creatures. And then she wondered how it was, that any man with so large a soul, should have so little substance. It really seemed as if all Jericho's flesh went to make heart!

And Monica entirely vanquished her fears. And Agatha never screamed again : no ; she would smile when she met her dear father ; more, would raise herself upon her toes, and take a kiss from him, gulping it with great content. How, indeed, could wicked rumours any longer pass into the ears of the young ladies, when their father had hung there the costliest ear-rings ? Those diamonds—like the diamond shield of St. George—shamed and confounded everything false that approached them. A happy thought, this, of Jericho's, to protect an ear with a diamond.

Nevertheless, Mr. Jericho was doomed to meet with a rebuff. In the full flush of victory he was to be chilled. Among his laurels there was an ugly, domestic slug, that would stick there. And this, too, with Jericho's power of money! However, the annoyance was only passing ; a bank-note or two would wipe the eyesore off; would make the soiled leaf immortally green. Now, this contemptible, yet irritating slug, was our young friend Basil, changed almost as much as Jericho himself. Love had seemed to give sudden maturity to his brain: had seemed to have advanced to meet time on his way, learning by anticipation his goodly lessons. It was only at intervals that Basil's odd, quaint spirit, that had shone in him from boyhood, would now reveal itself. At times, he would be as fantastic as ever, but the fitful jest would die in sudden gravity. However, altered as Basil was, his arrival at the mansion of Jericho was a matter of delight to his mother and sisters. Mrs. Jericho's only trouble was, that her foolish boy would not be friendly with his excellent father. And both the girls would earnestly assure their brother—though they must own Mr. Jericho got awfully thin, and they could not account for it—that after all he was a dear, kind man, and never refused anything.

"Why, what is the matter, my dear Basil?" said Mrs. Jericho. "Why you look ten years older. I'm sure you study too much. And, you foolish boy, why should you study at all, now?"

"Why, indeed, mamma?" asked Monica. "Why not leave law to people — poor creatures! — who have nothing but their wits? By what I hear, there's not room even for them: and, as Mr. Candituft says, it is not kind — it is not philanthropic — for wealth to study to take the bread out of the mouths of the indigent. Do give up those horrid chambers, and be a gentleman."

"Yes, dear," said Agatha; "and if you must employ your time, why not go into the army? You would look charming, Basil, you would, indeed; and I'm sure Mr. Jericho would buy you as many regiments as you'd like to be officer to. Do be a soldier —there's a darling."

"Or, my dear Basil,"—observed Mrs. Jericho with serious emphasis, — "as you seem strangely inclined to a sober view of the world, if you would prefer the Church—not, for my own part, that I think any profession necessary for you—nevertheless, if you have a regard for the Church—I do not see, looking into the probability of events, and contemplating—as I have contemplated—the growing interests of Mr. Jericho—I do not see, my dear child, why you should not be a bishop." And Mrs. Jericho resignedly folded her hands at the prospect of Canaan.

"Thank you, my dear madam—in the meantime can I see Mr. Jericho?" asked Basil.

"Of course, my love. He'll be enchanted at your visit; delighted to see you. Here, my dear." Basil followed his mother; who, pausing in an ante-room, turned to her son. "Now, my dear boy, do be courteous to your father. He loves you — I know he loves you. And yet you will look so coldly. Ha ! Basil, you don't know Mr. Jericho's heart."

" Hm ! said Basil.

" My dear," said Mrs. Jericho, entering the library, where Jericho sat, " I have brought you a truant."

" Happy to welcome him," said Mr. Jericho ; and he rose, and approaching Basil, held out his hand. Basil, with a look of horror, started back.

" Basil ! My love ! " cried Mrs. Jericho, astonished at her son's emotion. " What is the matter ? "

" Why the truth is, dear madam " — said Basil — " I haven't seen Mr. Jericho for some time ; and if he continue to dwindle at the same rate, I take it in another month he'll hardly be visible to the naked eye."

" Mr. Pennibacker,"—said Jericho, with all his power of money —" have you any business with me ? "

" If you please — in private," and Basil looked at his mother.

" Basil ! " cried Mrs. Jericho, in a tone of protest ; but Jericho waved his hand, and without another word, Mrs. Jericho obeyed the implied gesture. Some shrews are tamed by the more tyrannous constitution. Mrs. Jericho had been altogether overcome, softened into the most docile of creatures by her husband's money. He seemed to have bought the good-will of her bad temper.

" I am to understand, Mr. Pennibacker," said Jericho majestically, " that you refuse my hand ? "

" If you please," answered Basil.

" It is my affection for your mother, my love for her daughters, and—I ought to be ashamed perhaps to confess the weakness—and a lingering esteem for you, that induce me to condescend to ask, why you presume to refuse the hand—the hand, young man—that has fostered you ? "

" Mr. Jericho," said Basil, plunging into his subject, " are you aware what the world says of you ? "

" What ? " asked Jericho, with a grim and ghastly smile.

" Why, it says that—common report, by the way, isn't very choice in its language—it says that you have sold yourself to the devil."

Jericho rose, and with his sternest dignity and best composure, asked—" Will you take the stairs, young man, or shall I have you thrown out of the window ? "

" Just one moment, sir, and when I've finished my business, I'll make my choice. You sent me some bank-notes, Mr. Jericho," said Basil, taking a letter from his pocket.

"I am almost ashamed to own it," answered Jericho. "But I knew that to a young man—a youth of generous feelings—money was always acceptable; and—yes, I am ashamed to confess it—I was weak, foolish, fond enough to supply you with a large sum of money." Here Mr. Jericho took out his pocket-handkerchief.

"I did not believe the story of the diabolic transfer," said Basil; and Jericho believed he had softened his son-in-law;—"not for want of witnesses; because, we know, when the devil buys, two parties are sufficient to the deed. That I know, allow me to say, as a moralist and a lawyer."

Jericho ventured to bow.

"I had heard the story of the duel; and inquired into it. As for the bullet going through your heart, Mr. Jericho, and you still paying the world the politeness to remain among us, I did not—though it posed me at first—I did not believe that, either. The bullet was a figure—the hole a metaphor—I was satisfied, and thought my mother safe."

"I respect your filial anxiety, Mr. Pennibacker, though it is so ridiculously needless. Ha! ha! Then you were satisfied of the insanity of Doctor Dodo? By the way, poor man! I'm sorry for him—sorry for his family. Of course, his practice is gone; no man's life safe in his hands. Poor fellow! Well, well, we're frail, feeble creatures. Very arrogant in our wisdom, and yet—let a pin's point touch the brain, as Doctor Stubbs well observes—and where are we? However, the poor Doctor's family shall not starve. No: I shall most assuredly provide for his widow and children." But with all this, Jericho failed to call forth any cordial love from Basil's face. He sat stern and self-sustained.

"You sent me this letter, Mr. Jericho,"—said Basil—"with bank-notes?"

"A thousand pounds in—I believe—in hundreds," answered Jericho, carelessly.

"May I ask, sir, where you took these notes?" asked Basil.

"Where! What is that to you, sir?" and Jericho began to chafe. At last, with a forced smile, as though disdaining himself for the condescension, he said—"They're new notes, ar'n't they?"

Basil looked at Jericho, and then at the notes. Then he crumpled the paper in his fingers, and the sympathetic heart—the heart of money—felt a pang, and Jericho was, for a moment, drawn up in his chair, knees to chin. Basil eyed him with a fierce look—eyed the notes. "Humph!" he said, "Odd, tough paper! And the marks don't look like ink, but black blood."

"What do you mean, villain?" cried Jericho; and—it was a momentary flash of thought, of will—and Jericho saw Basil, dallying as he was with the secret, silenced, killed, put out of the way.

"And the hole, sir! Do you mark?" and Basil smoothed out a note. "Odd, isn't it? Just the round of a pistol bullet," and Basil advanced the perforated paper under the very nose of Jericho, who, fallen in his chair, shrank up bodily from the note as from a spear's point. "Come, sir," cried Basil, "confess at once."

"Why, what is the matter? Confess!" cried Mrs. Jericho, who had lingered near the door, and, alarmed and confused by the half-sentences that reached her, re-entered the library. "Confess what?"

"I will confess," said Jericho: "and I could only wish that all the world could hear me; that all the world might know your baseness," and the Man of Money glared at Basil.

"Baseness! Impossible! Dearest Solomon!" cried Mrs. Jericho.

"My love," said Jericho: "I have acted weakly—I own it. Condescending to the prejudices of society, in a rash moment, I consented to fight a duel."

"The rumour, Solomon, had reached me; but I would not reproach you: no; I have struggled with my feelings, and been silent. You cared not to make me a widow," said Mrs. Jericho, "but heaven knows I forgive you."

"I received my adversary's ball here,"—said Jericho, spreading his hand over his heart. "A poor man must have been killed, but there is a fate that watches over property. I was providentially preserved by my money. I hope I am thankful," and Jericho carefully wiped his dry eyes.

"Proceed—I conjure you," exclaimed Mrs. Jericho, with an alarming gush of tenderness.

"I carried my pocket-book here: 'twas full of notes, the ball went through every one of them; and"—

Mrs. Jericho shrieked, as though the peril was imminent.

"And stopt short at my shirt," and Jericho paused.

"I breathe again," exclaimed the thankful wife.

"Well, my dear, I now come to my confession. I had intended to present your son with a handsome amount on his approaching birth-day. I sent him a thousand pounds. It now appears—for the circumstance had escaped me—that the notes were among those perforated by the pistol-ball. I might have thought"—and Jericho tried to feel much hurt—"that such perforation would have enhanced the value—yes, of a thousand pounds ; but, I regret to say it, the young man is hardened—bronzed against the finest emotions of the soul—even when recommended by money. Madam, he is incorrigible."

Mrs. Jericho was wholly won by the story of her husband. Kind, good, generous creature ! So liberal to Basil. She sent to Jericho a look of thankful fondness, and then shook her head at her abashed offspring.

Yes—abashed. Basil was puzzled by the ingenuous confession of his father-in-law. For a moment he felt a touch of remorse, and was about to spring forward and seize Jericho's hand. And then he paused, and doubt came up again. "If I am wrong, Mr. Jericho—if I have been rash and rude, I shall be glad, delighted, sir, to ask your pardon. But you must allow me to take a little time—to sift my evidence a little finer. Meanwhile, sir, you may impound the money," and Basil laid the notes before Mr. Jericho. "Good-bye, my dear mother ; you'll hear, I hope, good news of me soon. Am on the high road of happiness, and hope soon to put up at 'All Earthly Bliss."

"A strange, wild creature," said Mrs. Jericho. following her son with loving looks as he darted from the room. "But good—yes, dear, believe it, good. His heart, I know it, is in its right place. And these"—and Mrs. Jericho took up the ten hundred pound notes with a hole in each—"and these protected *your* heart ! Henceforth, to me they are enhanced beyond all price.—Yes, Jericho—Solomon—husband," and the fond wife carefully folded up the bank-notes, and as carefully placed them in her bosom, laying her guardian hand above them—"yes, I shall treasure them. No power—none, Jericho—shall tear them from me. They saved your life, and to me they are hereafter beyond all price."

Jericho endeavoured to look resigned—pleased. Such devotion flattered him, though he could not but feel that it cost him a thousand pounds.

(With respect to the hole in the heart, let us clear up as we proceed. In a very little while every bank-note was perfect as before. This was to be expected. When a heart is wholly made of money, how can it long feel the worst of wounds ?)

CHAPTER XV.

And Mr. Jericho went on, a rejoicing conqueror. His huge town mansion, burning with gold—the very domain of upholstery, massive, rich and gorgeous, for the Man of Money was for the most substantial, the most potent development of his creed, whereby to awe and oppress his worshippers—his house, in its wide hospitality, embraced, as Jericho devoutly believed, the world. Let all mankind outside his walls suddenly sink and die, and he would be convinced that still under his roof-tree were gathered together all the men and women who composed the heart, the kernel of human life. The earth might be replenished and set up again all the better, the finer; both for what was lost, and what was spared. The kernel might grow kernels, without husk or straw.

And comfortable, happy people, with the bread of competence and the butter of comfort inch-thick, would nevertheless marvel at the imagined happiness, the life-long rapture of Jericho. And honest, well-to-do folk, from country homes would stare at Jericho House as though it was made of a single diamond cut into chambers and banqueting-halls: for it was to them a magnified Mountain of Light, albeit they had never heard of the jewel. And London paupers stared at the walls, as though they saw in them a strange, fantastic reflection of their own rags and wretchedness; and took a savage pleasure, a malicious joy in seeing their hungry faces flung back from the House of Gold. And there were others who delighted, though they tasted not of his labours, in all that Jericho did: they instinctively loved him for his money, although they had no hope of a farthing of it. Nevertheless was he to them a mighty power—a great presence; one of the wonders of our mortal state. Could Mr. Jericho have papered the sky with bank-notes, these impartial admirers would have sung praises to the work and the workman. It would have been a marvellous triumph of wealth; to be honoured by the well-to-do accordingly.

Nevertheless, so headstrong, so self-destructive was Basil Pennibacker, that he refused to cross the threshold of Jericho House. He resolved to break for ever with the Man of Money. He had made his last essay upon his own spirit; and impulsive and indignant, it rose above the politic restraint. He would touch no farthing of Jericho's means; he would, in his own want, be nevertheless his own man of money.

Basil sat in his chamber writing. A letter lay before him. It was from his mother—the last of many, sent day after day—entreating him to Jericho House. All the world would be there, only too glad to show delight upon the occasion; for it was Basil's birth-day. On that day, he came of age. On that day, he gave a quittance to natural and legal guardians; and became invested with the rights of citizen. On that day, in Basil's own words, he was free to sit down in Parliament, if he could only find a seat. On that day, he took possession of man's estate—with *his* purposes and aspirations, a glorious heritage! And Basil proposed to keep his birth-day in finest state, too, though not at the board of his legal father. And this determination he had again written—had folded and sealed the letter, when the clock struck twelve. Basil rose to his feet at the first stroke, and, with self-communing looks, paused until the hour was told. In that brief space, he had entered into a compact with his heart, and—with uplifted eyes—silently asked for strength to maintain it.

Basil then cast a heap of papers in the flames—letters and other records of his dead, disowned life—and, as he stood leaning at the fireside, watching the destruction of notes and recollections once so treasured; as he looked down upon the curling flames, and now and then tossed back some scattered fragments to the burning heap, he laughed a moment as in contempt of his olden idols—for he had worn some of those things in his bosom, had kissed them with his lips, had read their words, as though he caught their syllables from speaking mouths. And now he laughed; and the next moment a grave look rebuked the levity. The flames went out; the papers were consumed; and casting one look at their ashes, specked with dying fire, Basil went to his rest. He had fulfilled his self-promise; had accomplished his first work. He had, as he purposed, seen his birth-day in alone: in due and solemn state—as he was fain in after-times to avow; with preparation and with ceremony befitting the crowning One-and-Twenty.

Basil rose early on his birth-day. He was up and out; for he feared to be waylaid by his mother and sisters—and he had resolved, and it was hardly the day to begin with weakness, not to be made the show at Jericho House. And he felt anger, pity, that Bessy and her father and mother—the girl so sweet, so gentle; the old man with so cheery and strong a heart; and the wife so soft and patient, with not a frown or angry word for fortune—should be forgotten, cast aside like holiday garments sported and worn out:—that his mother and sisters should do this—should value his love for the daughter of a ruined man, as a mere caprice—a wayward generosity, which, with any other youthful freak, would last its time, and then subside and die—gave him the heart-ache, not unmixed with shame—the sharp shame that comes with blushes for those we love.

Basil, we say, left home early, resolved in his own fashion to celebrate his coming of age. It was the first day he showed to the world,—a citizen. He had determined to strip himself for the race of life, casting aside all needless trappings; all foolish cumbrous pride; all vanities, that at their best bladdery lightness, take much room; and sometimes, make much idle noise. He would start in his path like a runner in his course. But he shall give the history of the day—an odd, curious day for a newly-risen heir—in his own words. He shall give it as he narrated it years after; when the flush of youth had passed from his brow; and in manly maturity of strength and beauty, with some forty years descended with grace and goodness on his head; some forty years hardening his cheek; and looking with sober sweetness from his eyes,—he told the story of his twenty-first birth-day, to his eldest boy aged eighteen.

"It was after this manner, Basil"—for the boy though some time distant from the world, is upon arrival to have his father's name—"after this manner, boy.

"Up and early through the city to the fields; and there, in the eye of God, my knees upon their kindred clay, my spirit seeking its hoped-for home—I asked a blessing on the day. I prayed that my heart might feel the freshness of life, even as my body felt in every limb the freshness of the morning earth. I prayed that my soul might be lighted, even as my sight, with the glory that from the gates of heaven streamed upon the world. I prayed that I might carry through my days the mingled feelings of that time.—The constant touch of earth that warned me whence I came—the flooding light of heaven that showed me where I'd go.

"And then, Basil, I walked about the fields, and began to school myself—making little moralities by the way—to see nothing common in my path, wheresoever it fell—still to wonder at a blade of grass, with its thousand veins, carrying up and down the nourishing green blood. And, then, I would lay down awhile, and listen to the lark—there is a mighty orchestra in fields and woods, if we would but cultivate the ear to attend to the musicians,—listen until my blood throbbed in my ears, and I sprang to the earth, bounding with joy and life. And then, I peeped in and out of hedges, plucking little gentle, bashful flowers, that looked so beautiful in the light, and preached this lesson—one of the many of the day—to him who plucked them; to look tenderly, thoughtfully for humble worth,—the hedge flowers of the world; the very poor relations, but still relations, of the lilies of the field.

"After an hour or two, I felt it must be time for breakfast; and I resolved to take the meal in patriarchal state. And I moreover resolved, on this day, to take a lesson of temperance. So I pitched upon a little bit of a hillock, no higher than a woolsack, with a tall poplar in the middle of it. Well, I lay myself down, and laid my breakfast. Rolls, and butter, a bottle of milk, and hard eggs. But the moment I was about to fall to, a bird, perched on the top branch of the tree, piped away, as though giving me especial welcome to his breakfast parlour: pausing to acknowledge the creature's civility, my breakfast still remained untasted. Just as the music was finished, a miserable woman—a moving bundle of rags—with three children, crawled round a corner of the hedge and paused, and for the moment, seeing my breakfast, looked as though they beheld the Land of Promise (if, indeed, such misery had been ever cheered with the tidings of it).

"And now there were four unexpected guests—four hungry mouths, that, without uttering a syllable, had declared for my breakfast. The wretched woman's eyes shone with an uncomfortable light; a glittering sharpness, as she saw the food. And the children though they never stirred a foot—the bread and butter seemed to drag their hungry heads and shoulders forward. A grand opportunity this for self-discipline. Providence had so ordered it, that I might open my Twenty-First Birth-day in a goodly and hopeful manner. I gladly acknowledged the occasion; and, at a word, called the woman and her children to the outspread meal—there was not enough for all of us—and yielding my place, departed. It was plain the woman thought me mad. She watched me as I ascended the hill; and—I could see—wondering at the stranger, sat down with her children, doubtless thanking her fortune that had that day sent her a lunatic. And this was my breakfast when I came of age—so began my trial-birthday.

"I made my way back to the town, that I might go on with my lessons: for I determined to study one matter or the other until I returned to bed. I walked in the Park. There was a drill-serjeant at work with a score or so of young recruits; human clods in scarlet livery. It was odd, and in my humour, sad to see with what pains and care the master-man thumped and punched and rapped and rebuked his louting, goggling, shambling 'prentices. With what serene stupidity they took a tap upon the knuckles, as though the cane was some light prettiness of office—some radiant peacock's feather ; nought uglier or heavier descending. Curious, too, to see how contentedly these lumps of men would swallow an oath and curse flung at them, as though the blasphemy and malediction were an expected part and portion of their daily bread. And so these civil babes and sucklings were swathed and bandaged, and set upon their legs, and taught to walk, and shoot, and stab, and—upon severe occasions—to throw firebrands among cottage thatch, and bombshells upon consecrated churches. And I thought this a sad sight ; spectacle of folly and crime, and ignorance. And I determined, for my life forward, whenever I heard of glory, to think and speak of it as an evil in the ornaments of greatness—a harlot in jewels and a crown ; and these filched from the transmuted toil of the peasant and the craftsman. And this was the next lesson of my birth-day.

"Then I wandered to a famous spot.—It was where, in the olden time, the great grim men in power—who wore authority, as though authority should have the look and manners of an ogre, not of a sage—set up the pillory wherein men were punished for having souls with more than the proper daring and stubbornness of souls. Souls that would have their own opinions, as their masters had their own teeth ; to digest for themselves, and not take in the spoon's meat of power, with thankful looks for what was given them. And the bodies corrupted with these wicked and rebellious souls were placed in the pillory—and approaching the spot, I bowed to the place ; the martyr-field of opinion. And—perhaps, it was that I was hungry, and with empty stomachs, men, they say, have sometimes wandering heads, but my son"—(the reader, we trust, has not forgotten that Basil is all the while talking in this page by anticipation—compelled to do so by the tyranny of the quill, to his unborn boy Basil, junior)—"but my son, I winked, and when I looked again, there, indeed, was the pillory : but not the pillory of punishment ; not the dry, meagre wood ; the hungry flesh-devouring timber.—No : the blood that had run about it carried strange virtue with it ; a strange excellence, under the brooding wings of time. The naked wood imbibed the stream ; and the bare pillory became leafy as laurel, and fruitful as the vine : the leaves of a strange sort, but undying ; and filled with a sweet perfume that scented far around. And the fruit was of a curious, a delicious kind ; bite and bite as you would, the lovely pulp returned, the wound healed ; now bitten, and now whole. Well, my boy, having had my day-dream—my vision of the pillory—I learned to strive to look backward with thankful looks: I learned to read the suffering of the man by the light of his time, and—with all love for the living—to have gratitude for the dead. We are too apt to bury our accounts along with our benefactors; to enjoy the triumphs of others, as though they were the just property of ourselves. Now, to think against this, was another lesson—a lesson learned in the Place of Pillory—of my birth-day.

"And then I looked into a Court of Law—then into a church—then went upon 'Change,—and in every place tried to divide man from his double or false man—from the artificial twin-self that so often walks about the world with him in profane places, and sometimes in sacred temples.

"And I went into miserable lanes, where human creatures, styed like swine, had little beyond the swine's instinct,—to eat and drink, and gabble brutishly. And even here, I learnt to reverence the human heart, for, in some foul place, some very nest of misery,—there, it would flourish in its best beauty, giving out even in such an atmosphere the sweets of love, and charity, and resignation. It was in one of these places I took a crust for my dinner; and tried to swallow a life-long lesson of patience, and contentment with the meal.

"And this and these were the lessons I tried to learn on my twenty-first birth-day. Coming to man's estate, I lost no time, you see, but set out to contemplate for that day what it was that lay about me."

The reader, who has advanced somewhat more than eighteen years, to read the foregoing confession, will be pleased to turn back on the road, it is to be hoped satisfied with the employment of Basil, whom we left at early morn setting out for his birth-day work. We take it there are few who thus upon the threshold of manhood welcome one-and-twenty. Who knows? The example of Basil may beget followers.

Early the next morning, Basil took his road to Primrose Place. He had resolved at once to ask Bessy of her father. He would not accept a shilling of Jericho; he would not compromise his conscience by submitting to the poorest obligation at his hands; nevertheless, he felt in his heart such a spring-tide of hope and happiness, that the worst worldly difficulties were but as a hedge of thorns, to be thrust aside by an arm of resolution.

Mr. Carraways was alone: deep in his book; and more and more assured that he was securing a stock of knowledge that should make him flourish at the antipodes. It was a little late, as poor Mrs. Carraways would meekly, sadly suggest, for such removal; but the old man, with every day and hour, assured his wife—assured Bessy, who, though she tried to smile and look content, pined and withered beneath the sentence—that it was the only place for broken men to grow whole again. They would yet see him in the fulness of fortune; and he would yet leave his girl with the dowry of a lady.

"Good morning, Basil," said the old man, with somewhat forced politeness; for though he had a true regard for the youth, he cared not to see him so often at Primrose Place as in old times at Jogtrot Lodge. However, the ship would sail soon, and, with this thought, Carraways called up his old look of cordiality, and gave his old grasp of the hand. "Why, you are out early for a reveller, eh? After your doings, last night?"

Basil stared. He then remembered: Carraways doubtless spoke of the festival held at Jericho House, in honour of the absent. He would not explain this. He merely said—"I take but little sleep, sir."

"Hm! How's that?" asked Carraways. "But the fact is, Basil, you seem changed altogether. I sometimes think that one of the judges has lost his gravity, and you've picked it up: for after all, it doesn't seem very well to fit you. I hardly know if I like you so well in it as in the boy suit. However, you're right, lad. Be grave betimes: 'tis best, and prepares you beforehand for the knocks that are certain to come. Though, to be sure, if a man may count upon a bright and easy road—a path of diamond-dust, with rosebud borders, like the gardens in the fairy-book—you are the man."

"Indeed, sir," and Basil shook his head, "I think—that is, I know you mistake my path of life. 'Tis not so fine; and more, I hope not so tedious as that you see for me. In a word, I shall owe nothing to Mr. Jericho."

"Indeed! What, quarrelled with him? I'm sorry for that. You should remember your interest, Basil."

"There, my good sir, without a thought you speak a wisdom that with a thought you despise. I shall try to make interest one with honesty; if it succeeds, why, the profits will bring the best sweets of gain; if it fails, why, still it leaves something behind: it is not all beggary."

"Very good, very excellent, Basil"—said Carraways—"nevertheless, you must not cast away Mr. Jericho. He is a strange man, no doubt. If half that's said of him be true, a very strange man. But then again only that very half, said of the most of us, would make a deuced alteration in the best looking,—the most punctual and respectable. Therefore, not half—no, not a twentieth part that's said—is to be listened to. Nevertheless

Basil"—and, despite of himself, Carraways looked grave, and felt the craving of curiosity—"nevertheless do you know, it is all about the world that your father-in-law, a few days since received a pistol-bullet through his heart, and that moreover his heart has a hole through it at this very moment?"

"Yes, I have heard the story," said Basil. "One of the jokes of"—

"Ha! Well, I thought so; a joke is it? Bessy would have it that it meant nothing more than a fable—or hieroglyphic—or something of that sort. Of course, I knew that. I knew a man couldn't live with a hole in his heart," for all which Carraways seemed a little disappointed at Basil's half-explanation at the moment. Common truth fell like cold water upon the awakened fancy of the old merchant; with the greater shock, as it was rare indeed that he laid himself out for an enjoyment of the extraordinary.

"And now, sir," said Basil, and he almost trembled as he spoke, "I wish to address you upon the dearest question of my life."

"Bless me!" said Carraways, and he gravely seated himself, and motioned Basil to a chair. Then the old man, with a slight tremor of hand, wiped his spectacles, replaced them on his nose, cleared his throat, clasped his hands, and endeavoured to look the very study of easy, unconscious courtesy; placid and polite. And at the time the colour was tingling in his cheeks, and he felt his heart beat distinctly, painfully.

In few stammering words, speech running freer as it flowed, Basil spoke of his affection for Bessy. All that has been said since the first father was first asked for the first daughter—if the reader be capable of the task, may be imagined; and the most eloquent and affectionate phrases assorted from the mountain of words, to piece out at the bravest and best the declaration of Basil. At length he paused. Carraways pressed his hand, and looked mournfully in the young man's face.

"My dear young man," said the father, "once, when the fortune was of our side, I should have been glad to hear this. I should have been proud of you as a husband for Bessy. Now, it can't be."

"Why not? Indeed, dear sir, I"—

"We have not a shilling, Mr. Pennibacker. Not a shilling. We have just scraped together a loan—a gratuity—alms—whatever the world may call it, to take ourselves out of the way. I will not quarter my family upon your relations. Quarter! Why, 'twould be the town-talk that that cunning old fox Carraways had gulled a foolish boy—the Man of Money's son—to marry a beggar girl. And all to end his own days in clover. No, sir ; no. You're very good, Basil ; you mean this honestly, nobly ; I'm sure you do ; but you'll think better of it ; and with the prospects that await you — with the part you have to play in the world—in a little while, you'll thank me for refusing you."

"No, sir, no : for your refusal—though I can fully value the integrity of its meaning — will change into consent, when you become assured that no influence, no argument of wealth or station, can make me debtor to Mr. Jericho for a single shilling. I will provide for my wife—for Bessy "—

"You are very good," said Carraways, melting somewhat at the passion of the youth, " very good ; but the fact is, my dear lad — and make your mind up once and all to hear it — the fact is, Bessy is already provided for."

" Provided ! Already ! " cried Basil, and the young man turned pale as a corpse, and shook from head to limb.

Carraways was yet more affected by the youth's emotion. Kindly he took Basil's hand — "I mean my good boy — don't mistake me, I would'nt be mistaken ; for I can live back my life " — and the old man's eyes glistened, and his voice trembled —" live it back in my memory to the very moment, when I asked for Bessy's mother, and I—I can feel for you, my lad ; believe it, Basil ; I can, boy — I can," and Carraways stood shaking Basil's hand, his eyes swimming the while,—begging him to dismiss the matter from his mind, and be "a good boy and a man."

"I entreat you, good sir—I entreat you, by the precious memories you speak of—tell me what it is you mean ! Bessy provided "—

"I mean with a—a ship," said Carraways, with forced cheerfulness.

" A ship ? " exclaimed Basil.

" Yes—a ship," answered Carraways. " And I remember I have an appointment with the Captain. So if you will you shall walk part of the way with me ? " A proposition that, as the reader will conclude the politic lover immediately assented to.

CHAPTER XVI.

Nothing could have been more perfect—more complete—than the magnificent festival at Jericho's house, in nominal honour of the coming of age of Basil Pennibacker. At an early hour, Basil's chambers had been beset; beautiful presents and delicate bouquets were sent to the student, and they who brought them found no one to relieve the porters, no one to utter a word to them. All the greeting they met with, was mutely delivered from a piece of written paper, wafered outside the inhospitable door. The greeting ran as follows:—*To all who may present themselves. Mr. Basil Pennibacker has gone out to spend the day with One-and-Twenty Friends. May not return till to-morrow. No relatives admitted (on this day) either on business or pleasure. Vivat the Tenant.*" For all this, Mr. Jericho felt assured that Basil would, some time of the evening, present himself. The hours wore on, and though the hostess and the young ladies were now and then anxiously, nay affectionately, examined upon the probable causes of Mr. Basil's absence,—after a while, all the world resolved to forget the cause of the junket, almost as entirely as though it had been a funeral festival of the olden day; a pottle-pot carouse in memory of the new deceased. And then, let every fair excuse be charitably received. Folks had their own affairs to attend to; their own little interests to look after — their own mortal appetites to appease. Between four and five hundred people came to do honour to Jericho's household gods, honouring his son-in-law. And if Basil could have flattered himself that his absence would cast ten minutes' cloud above that brilliant mob, very much indeed, could he have taken a peep at it, would he have been rebuked for his presumption. As we have said, people had their own affairs to mind.

Mrs. Jericho had, it is true, a mother's heart, and every five minutes — hour after hour — looked where Basil might appear; and as the time wore on, and there was no Basil, the mother now drooped, and now roused herself into some sudden happiness—some violent enjoyment at some poor platitude, stamped for true wit, with impress sharp enough to be passed on and on for the true coin.

Monica Pennibacker was sorry, vexed, that Basil had not come: it was so wayward, so foolish. Nevertheless, she could not sacrifice the lover to the brother; and the Hon. Mr. Candituft had, no doubt, confounded by the blaze of Monica's beauty—for even the best of beauty has its happy killing times—a beauty, accidentally assisted by magnificent jewels,—committed himself as a man of honour, once and for ever. He had snatched five minutes — hardly five—to speak definitely of marriage; he had many times played about the subject, and now he had walked up to the ring,—why, at a blow, Monica, self-sustained as an Amazon, referred the gentleman to her father. The thing was done; and the Hon. Cesar Candituft had nothing more for it than to dance off reflection till the morning. But no: Cesar thought of Monica's dowry, and was not the man to jest, even to himself, upon so solemn a subject.

When we know more about the laws of electricity, it is probable that there may be a new statute—a law of society—against so many people meeting to dance. Who shall say,—that one man, nerved to the deed, to make an offer of marriage, in a window-corner or any other angle of a ball-room — does not in fifty other places, electrically affect fifty other people? For all our present ignorance permits us to interpret, as many rings as go to bed-curtains may at the same moment pass from hand to hand. We do not wish to anticipate or force opinion on this most serious subject. But as prosaic chroniclers of a prosaic history, we must state this much; leaving the inference to the reader. — Almost at the same moment that Mr. Candituft solemnly proposed to Monica, Sir Arthur Hodmadod, urging the lady to name the inevitable day, assailed sweet Agatha. At the same moment; for the young ladies, ere they slept, compared the time by their own little tiny repeaters.

Colonel Bones never appeared so well — never had so comfortable an air as at the party. He seemed, for that night, to have washed away his grimy pauper look, and entered into an understanding with himself to display the gentleman. Perhaps it was the new habit acquired by Colonel Bones, that gave a certain air of courtesy and glitter to him; for Colonel Bones took snuff from a box set with lovely brilliants, the gift of his dear friend and late antagonist, Solomon Jericho.

Commissioner Thrush and Doctor Mizzlemist, also jewelled by the Man of Money, were after their fashion blithe and happy; with the fullest conviction of the sound-heartedness of their host. Indeed the hole in Jericho's heart, had, in the world's opinion closed like a hole in sand: he had, by the force of his magnificence, so conquered and confounded slander. Only one foe remained unbeaten; the obstinate, pig-headed Dodo, who — wherever he could tear the hole open afresh — would avow his faith in the diabolic existence of Jericho. And people listened, then shook their heads, and—behind his back—pitied poor Dodo. Very zealous friendship had moved Jericho to prosecute the slanderer ; but the Man of Money, with his own magnanimity replied — " Put Doctor Dodo in court ! No, poor man ; I would rather put him in a strait waistcoat."

The day after the birth-day festival, Mr. Jericho sat in his library in the happiest of humours. In a very quiet way, and in the shortest possible time, he had won of Lord Bezant five thousand pounds. Lord Bezant was one of the Duke of St. George's friends ; one of the superb knot of men with whom his Grace, in the most condescending manner, had made Jericho intimate. Five thousand pounds ! A sum in itself of little account to our Man of Money ; but as an earnest of the favours of fortune, of the first and dearest importance. For every thousand that Jericho won upon dice or cards—he might, moreover, under friendly guidance, be lucky on the turf—was so much substance saved. True it was that he made the birth-day feast given in the name of Basil a victory to himself; true it was, he had his passing time of triumph ; but he saw, he felt the cost. He knew that every farthing came from his heart ; he knew that to make such outward show he had shrunk and dwindled to fearful tenuity. Hence, he now slept apart ; solitary in his chamber. He had no doubt of his vitality ; nevertheless, the principle of his wealth might wear him to a rag, a shred ; and, at the worst, this must be unknown. Therefore, we say, it was a new delight to Jericho when a belief in his constitutional good luck dawned upon and deepened in him. Men—a happy few—had carried from the gambling table the splendours of wealth, and why should not he be one of fortune's—or the fiend's—elect ?

Jericho, since his introduction to the Duke of St. George — who had so handsomely circulated the plebeian among a host of noble friends — had never played that he had not risen a winner. Altogether, in the merest point of time, he had won some fifteen thousand pounds. As Jericho thought of this, he laid his hand above his paper heart, and promised a long repose to the fund. Fortune had no doubt fallen in love with him, and would give him all he asked. Therefore he would make the grand tour, and—the Napoleon of Trumps—break every bank in Europe.

Could Mrs. Jericho, bound as she was, upon the tenderest of missions, break upon her lord in happier hour ? Serene and softened by the conviction of his destined magnificence, he was a little disposed to enter, by way of passing amusement, into the sympathies and affections of his people about him.

"No news of Basil," said Mrs. Jericho: "but, be assured, Solomon, his absence was no intended affront."

"Don't name it, my dear. He was not missed. To please you, we did honour to his birth-day. The day was a graceful excuse for the fête—and as the fête was all that was required, why no doubt everybody was pleased. At least I saw no disappointment," and Jericho softly whistled.

"Nevertheless, for all his folly and perverseness — and I must blame him for his conduct — for all his ill-manners, and I cannot wholly justify him, I am sure, Solomon, sure that Basil loves you."

"If such is your opinion, Mrs. Jericho, I must make up my mind to suffer it."

Mrs. Jericho thought she would not persevere in the theme; therefore, with sudden vivacity, she changed the subject. "My dear, of course you are aware that our girls must, some time or other, settle in life."

"Your girls, my dear, have my free permission to settle when and where they will."

"I was sure of that, dear. I certainly think with our present position we ought to have commanded something better than a younger brother for Monica. Nevertheless, as Candituft is your friend, and I believe a good creature — and as they seem determined to have one another, why, why should we thwart them?"

"Why, indeed?" asked Jericho, very calmly.

"Sir Arthur Hodmadod," said Mrs. Jericho, in a tone of apology for the gentleman, "is certainly a fool"—

"What of that?" asked the philosopher. "Surely the family can bear one fool—eh? Wise enough for that?"

"My dear Solomon, you know best of course. To be sure, had we been tainted with worldly ambition, there is no doubt that we might have married our children in the very heart of the peerage, but"—

"I'm quite content as matters stand," said Jericho.

"As I say, you know best. Well, Monica informs me — and I thought, my love, I would prepare you — that Mr. Candituft intends to see you to-day; formally to ask your daughter at your hands."

"Indeed. Well, as far as I'm concerned, I'll give her to him with the greatest pleasure in life."

"Don't speak with such levity, love; don't," said Mrs. Jericho mildly; "marriage is not a mere bargain."

"Certainly not. Solemn compact—very solemn compact;" and again Jericho whistled.

"Well, then, Solomon, as you consent, what do you propose to give with the dear child?"

"Give, Mrs. Jericho! I'll give a magnificent party on the occasion. More than that,—I think—nay, I'm sure that to please me and honour you—my friend the Duke"—it was thus Jericho began to speak of his Grace of St. George—"my friend the Duke will give the wench away."

"'Twill add a perfume to the orange blossoms," cried Mrs. Jericho with a gush of sentiment. "'Twill, if possible, add a solemnity to the ceremony. But I mean what dowry do you give?"

"Dowry! I thought, my dear, you observed that marriage was no bargain? Why, you're making it quite a ready money transaction."

"Now, my dear Jericho, I admire your wit. It is brilliant, delightful—and I assure you, I am as proud of all your brilliant sayings, quite as proud as if they were my own. But this is"—

Here the servant entered with the card of "The Hon. Mr. Candituft."

"Show him in," said Jericho with an instant decision.

"My dear, exclaimed Mrs. Jericho, hurrying to depart, "I leave Monica in your hands. I know your noble heart; I'm sure you will treat her like a gentleman and—and a father." With this confiding speech Mrs. Jericho hastened from the room. Meeting Candituft at the door, she took his hand with the greatest cordiality, and with the prettiest ignorance of the purpose of his visit.

"'Pon my life, my dear sir," said Candituft, "I never saw such luck as you had last night."

"Why, yes," said Jericho, swelling into figure, "I think the blind goddess smirked a little on me."

"With such luck, had you set in for play, why, sir, before you rose you might have been owner of Zebra Park. Not but what upon principle I detest gambling. It is a vice destitute of the finer emotions that ought ever to exist among the family of man. Nevertheless, if a simpleton like Lord Bezant will be ruined, I do think he ought to fall to the lot of a gentleman and a wise man," and Candituft bowed to Jericho. "It is devilish annoying to see a fool flung away upon a mere vulgar brute of luck. It jars one's sense of propriety. No, at least, gentlemen ought to ruin gentlemen."

"A beautiful motto, Candituft. Have it written up at the Club," said Jericho.

"Needless, my dear sir, quite needless; 'tis in the hearts of the members. And now, my dear friend, for you are my friend," said Candituft, with his every-day emotion, "I have a delicate business to open to you. An affair affecting the happiness of "—

"Go on," said Jericho, quite prepared for the ordeal.

"But first let me not forget my friend," said Candituft. "Hodmadod is, we know, a fool."

Jericho, nursing his knee, replied, "I do not think the Parliament assembled could have the face to deny it."

"Nevertheless, a very good creature, and, I dare say, will make a good husband. Yes, he'll drive well in the wedding-ring."

"Let us hope so," replied Jericho, prepared for the best or the worst.

"But he's bashful as — as — 'pon my life, I'm at a loss for a simile. And as he and I are old friends, and as he knew that I should see you—in fact, he's in the house this moment; came along with me—he desired me to inform you that Miss Agatha had consented to fix the—the—what d'ye call it—the happy day."

"Wish them joy," said Jericho. "My friend the Duke shall give her away."

"As to the young lady's dowry," and Candituft hesitated.

"I can't give a farthing. Can't afford it, my dear Candituft," and the Man-Tamer laughed at the declaration as an intended jest. "Can't afford it. Besides, think of the girl's beauty, talents, temper!"

"They have all had their full influence upon my friend. And Arthur—good, silly fellow!—is not avaricious. Besides, he has a handsome property of his own; and I'm sure he'll be delighted, happy to marry the young lady merely for herself.

"That's true love — Cupid, as you see him in the valentines, without any property," said Jericho.

"Of course, my good friend, you will bestow a handsome outfit and "——

"To be sure. Half-dozen of every thing," said Jericho, and he laughed hugely at the joke: and the Man-Tamer, as in friendship bound, laughed his best in concert.

"Well, I have fulfilled my mission, and saved the awkwardness of my friend. You object not to the day, whenever it may be? And for the dowry, I mean the outfit, we who know your heart, may safely leave that to you. Yes, yes; Arthur, my good soft friend, Arthur, is a happy man. Once I fondly thought that my dear sister—however "—and Candituft sighed—"it was not to be. And now, sir "—

"Yes," cried Jericho, quite prepared for what was coming, "Yes; go on."

"You may have remarked my affection for Miss Monica. You must have remarked it?"

"I beg a thousand pardons," said the wag Jericho, "but it has quite escaped me."

Candituft wanly smiled. The jest was ill-timed; nevertheless he could not resent it from his friend. Therefore, he smiled and proceeded. "In a word, my dear sir, we have come to the sweet conclusion that we were made for one another."

"Dear me! Well, how lucky you should have met! I dare say, now"—and the cruel wit, with all his teeth and talons, played with the timid, mouse-like heart of his victim—"I dare say, now, there are thousands of people made for one another, at the present moment wandering about the world without a chance of coming together. Indeed, seeing how big the world is, and how very few people are really made to match, it's next to a miracle that they should ever meet at all. Eh?"

"My dear sir, your views of life are always so just,—are always clothed in such graceful and convincing language, that I cannot answer, I can only admire and bow. I trust, my dear sir, you do not oppose our love?" and Candituft shuddered at the dreadful suspicion.

"By no means," said Jericho. "Marry, marry, and be as happy as you can."

"A thousand thanks. You are aware, my dear sir, that my family is rich"—

"Eh?" cried the Man of Money.

"Rich in historical associations. The blood of the Candituft fructifies the fields of Cressy and Agincourt."

"Hm! And what's the crop—what's the yield? I have a great respect for blood, Mr. Candituft; it is in this world, a very useful, a very indispensable article. Nevertheless, blood in a field—no matter how old—is not the best investment. I speak, you know, as a vulgar Man of Money."

"I was about to observe," said the easy-tempered, but withal pensive suitor, "that I have too pure, too deep an affection for Miss Pennibacker, to make her the partner of only the glories of my house. A bachelor, my dear sir, though poor, receives a lustrous honour from the chivalry of his name; but it is an honour that, alone, will not do to marry upon."

"You mean," and Jericho grimly grinned, "the honour that's enough for one is not enough for two."

"Why, yes"—and Candituft hesitated—"I may say that is pretty well my meaning."

"And in this marriage with Miss Pennibacker, you propose to find the chivalry, the honour, if I—if I find the money? Eh?" cried Jericho.

"Mr. Jericho"—and Candituft thought he would assert the nobility of the blood in the grounds of Cressy and Agincourt—"Mr. Jericho, I do not come to deal with you for your daughter, as I would come to a grazier for"—

"What!" cried Jericho, jumping to his feet.

"I mean, desirous of maintaining Miss Pennibacker in that sphere which she was born to delight and illustrate, I *must* ask—you force me to be plain — what will you give with the young lady?"

"Not a farthing," cried Jericho. "Not one farthing," said the Man of Money with determined emphasis.

At this moment, quite casually, Mrs. Jericho entered the room. Seeing the stern looks of Jericho, the rebuked aspect of Candituft, she innocently inquired "What is the matter?"

"Pooh! you know well enough," cried Jericho, "Mr. Candituft wants to marry Nic."

"I was certainly aware of the honourable object of Mr. Candituft's ambition," said Mrs. Jericho.

"But that's not all," cried the Man of Money, "he wants to be handsomely paid for the trouble."

"Paid!" exclaimed the lady.

"Why, that's the plain thing. Paid. He wants a dowry."

"My dear, we will not talk upon the subject at present," said Mrs. Jericho. "I see you are in one of your sportive humours; in one of your gay moods, when you will make merry with the happy state."

"Quite so, my dear lady," said Candituft. "But as you say, we will not pursue the subject. Another time."

"By no means: better have it out at once," said Jericho.

"Don't name it," said Candituft. "In fact, my good sir," and the lover grew of a sudden cool and circumspect; "I think we had better postpone the matter till a more benignant season."

"Mr. Candituft!" exclaimed Mrs. Jericho.

"Happily," said the prudent suitor, "Miss Pennibacker is yet in the first blush and florescence of youth; and it may be, my dear lady, that fortune, with an amended estimate of the maiden's merits, may find her a nobler, a richer, though not"—and Mr. Candituft endeavoured with manly fortitude to suppress his emotion—"though not a fonder husband."

"I am sure of that," said Mrs. Jericho; "I have every confidence in you, my dear sir; and so has Mr. Jericho."

"Any amount of confidence," said the Man of Money. "Any amount."

"And as Monica has fixed her heart upon the union"—

"'Twould be a great pity," said Jericho, determined upon his humour, "to baulk a bold intention. Why, Mr. Candituft, the young lady is such a treasure in herself, that, upon my word, I think you ought, when you marry her, to remunerate us for our loss. It has always seemed to me that certain savages—as they are shamefully called—have the advantage of us in their habits of marriage."

"No doubt, my dear sir, if you think so," said Candituft stiffly. "For myself, I am in ignorance of the superiority."

"I mean in the habit that reverses the transaction: when the husband buys his wife of her father; and not as in our shamefully corrupt and sophisticated condition, when the father buys a husband for his girl. I have always set my face against the custom, — and I feel the time is come that I should strike a blow at the prejudice."

"Now, my dear Solomon,"—Mrs. Jericho knew it was no time to pursue the subject, and she contemplated, with some anxiety the deepening gravity of Candituft — "my dear Jericho, we will say no more upon the matter. In your present merry humour you care nothing for people's affections. You play what tune you please on people's heartstrings. Oh, you wits!" and the wife tapped the hard, dim face of the humourist Jericho.

"Well, well, let us have the jig out," said the relentless wag.

"Sir Arthur proposes to make Aggy Lady Hodmadod—I hear the day is named, though with great self-forbearance I've not asked whether it's to-morrow or next day."

"My dear Solomon," said Mrs. Jericho, "this is too much levity."

"Not at all: and I don't see why both the birds mayn't be trussed by the same parson. And so, after all, my good friend," —and the traitorous Jericho smiled.

"My dear sir,"— and Candituft with his best energy smiled in return.

"After all, let us settle the sum. Eh?"

"Be it as you will," said Mrs. Jericho, with the best duty of a wife, calling herself back to the subject.

"Well, then," said the Man of Money, and for his own private purpose of humour, he still smiled and coaxed his voice, "what sum would satisfy you?" It was a delicate question to be put thus nakedly. "Come, name a figure. Say five thousand pounds." Candituft looked blank at Jericho, moving not a muscle. "What do you think of seven?" The Man-Tamer gently lifted his eye-brows, deprecating the amount. "Come, then, we'll advance to ten?" Candituft's face began to thaw, and he showed some signs of kindly animation. "At a word, then," cried Jericho, with affected heartiness, "will you take fifteen thousand?"

"From you—yes," cried Candituft, and he seized Jericho's hand. The Man of Money looked at Candituft with a contemptuous sneer, and with a wrench twisted his hand away. He then dropt in his chair, and a strange, diabolical scowl possessed his countenance. The Man-Tamer shrank from his friend; Mrs. Jericho ran to her husband, but screamed at the sudden change that seemed to blot out the human character of his face. The Man of Money, with his own features, looked a devil.

"And where—where do you think this money is to come from? Where?" asked Jericho, and he rose from his chair, and it seemed as though the demon possessing him would compel the wretch to talk—would compel him to make terrible revealings. Every word he uttered was born of agony. But there he stood; forced to give out utterances that tortured him. "I will tell you," roared Jericho, "what this money is. Look about you. What do you see? Fine walls—fine pictures—fine everything. Why, you see me—tortured, torn, worked up, changed. The walls are hung with my flesh: my flesh you walk upon. There, that—that"—and Jericho pointed to the diamond on Candituft's finger—"that gem—that jewel, as bright as the sun in heaven—what is it? Why, it's my blood—my blood distilled, then hardened into stone. I am worn piecemeal by a hundred thieves, but I'll be shared among them no longer."

By this time, the girls and Sir Arthur Hodmadod, alarmed by the cries of Jericho, had entered the room.

"And you had a fine feast, had you not?" cried the possessed Man of Money, writhing with misery, and howling his confession. "And what did you eat? my flesh—what did you drink? my blood."

"It's impossible," cried Hodmadod, aghast. "When I say impossible"—

"The food, the wines, the gold and silver, all—all of me—and so I'm shared to feed fools and make a show. To make a show," Jericho repeated, his voice sinking, and he fell as in a fit in his chair.

For some minutes he lay as though he had passed into sleep; and the malignant expression gradually cleared from his face.

"Very odd," said Sir Arthur, "very strange. Better send for Dr. Stubbs."

"Hush! it's a fit, a passing fit; he's better now, and fast asleep," said Mrs. Jericho, whilst the girls exchanged strange looks with one another. "Fast asleep."

"I congratulate you," said Candituft to Hodmadod, as they both left the room, "he consents to your marriage."

"Does he?" asked Hodmadod, a little staggered by the courtesy.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MAN may be possessed with an evil spirit, and yet be wholly unconscious of the presence of his tenant. This may seem, at the first blush, an impossible circumstance; nevertheloss, we are upon reflection convinced that thousands of good, well-meaning people, carry about with them fitful, moody, captious, disorderly spirits, and are, notwithstanding, the very last folks to acknowledge the existence of the inmates. Now, it would seem that Mr. Jericho had this ignorance in especial strength and perfection. He was blessed with the happiest fogetfulness of the demon that, as was shown in the last chapter, afflicted his wife, and astonished his acquaintance. He had no after-thought of the unseemly words, of the vulgar violence uttered and committed by his evil spirit. Poor man! He was spared the pain, the humiliation of such knowledge; hence, the fit over, the spirit laid, Jericho was as gay and debonair as ever—quite.

To be sure Mrs. Jericho had affectionate misgivings; and the young ladies, with a keen memory of the wildness of their father-in-law, looked with hopefulness quite natural to the day when they should be delivered from his tyranny by the new benevolence of a husband. The girls, with the simple confidence of their sex, were assured of the devotion of their lovers. Poor things! Now Sir Arthur Hodmadod, with sudden treachery, had contemplated instant flight. He was alarmed, terrified at the thought of marrying the daughter of a man with such strange, such diabolic notions. Sir Arthur thought of the beneficial effect of a run through Italy. He could not disguise it from himself, that his heart was broken: and therefore, he was in the most interesting situation for a few months' exile. He would forget the living beauties of Agatha in the refined abstractions of paint and marble. He had promised himself some day to cultivate his taste for art, and it was plain, the proper time was come. And then—and then the lover remembered—(how, for an instant, could he have forgotten it?)—that Agatha bore no taint of Jericho's blood. No: she was a Pennibacker; the daughter of a warrior! And with this happy thought, Sir Arthur, with the mixed remorse and generosity of true affection, arrayed the dear one with newer, richer graces. But a mistress is never so captivating as when considered through the penitence of love.

The Hon. Cesar Candituft had sterner thoughts of marriage. Perhaps, too, he had larger views than his simple, gentle friend; and so, placed upon himself a corresponding value. We believe Sir Arthur—could he have been induced to think at all—would have considered matrimony as a very pleasant little trip in a gay little boat; with a bright sky, a smooth sea, and now and then a mermaid to come up, and warble a song of love. Now, Candituft would not attempt the voyage so embarked. He was for a secure craft, extremely well victualled, and—to be ready for the worst—carrying the heaviest metal. Therefore had Candituft resolved on the most guarded civility to Monica: he would, if possible, kill the love within her by the cutting coldness of his courtesy. For he had well considered himself: he had sat in impartial judgment upon his own claims to a wife; and he was convinced that if he could be brought to persuade himself to marry into the family of a lunatic, at least he would be well paid for the daring. Thus, if Monica's determination towards marriage could live through the cold season that was immediately to set in—if the hardy rose would smile through the frost—why, the flower, like the Druid's misletoe, should only be gathered with a golden blade.

A week wore on, and Candituft was only the more hardened in civility. A week wore on, and Hodmadod was only the more melted in love. But Monica would not feel the bitter season—whilst Agatha smiled and glowed in the full flush of the sunny time. Sir Arthur, on his part, was a little astonished that Candituft could for a moment hesitate to seize his happiness at the altar's foot, at the very time that he, the baronet, was to be crowned with joy for ever. Whereupon Candituft assured Sir Arthur that, for one day, it would be more than sufficient bliss to see his friend made happy. He doubted his strength to stand up against the double delight of double nuptials. Hence, for his part, he would wait. But we have a little anticipated; and have now to introduce a third party come upon a nuptial errand, to the Man of Money.

Basil, it may be remembered, left Primrose Place with Mr. Carraways, bent—as the old gentleman declared—upon business with the captain of a ship bound for the antipodes. It is needless to repeat any part of the conversation between the lover and the father, as they took their way to the *Halcyon*, a magnificent vessel, lying in the docks in all the seeming confusion of outfit. We will at once come to the result of the dialogue carried on—oddly enough—amid all the activity and clamour of London streets. Earnest as were the words of Basil, passionate as were his looks—was there a single passenger, of the hundreds that passed and passed, who could have divined that the young man was at such an hour, and in such a place, telling the story of his heart, pleading the passion of a life? Yet it was even so. And the old man, in his best blunt way, opposed the ardour of the youth; even whilst his father's heart glowed and throbbed at the expression. And then, as they walked onward, the old man spoke less and less, and Basil became more voluble. At length, Carraways stopt, and taking Basil's hand, said in a low, thick voice—"Well, lad; thus it is. If there is no objection at your home, and you are sure of Bessy,—she's yours. And, now, not another word upon the matter; for I see we've no time to lose."

As we are modestly convinced that every tittle of this history will in a hundred years or more be a theme for commentators—(the worthy folks who too often write on books, as men with diamonds write on glass, obscuring light with scratches)—as we know that this volume will be very thickly annotated, we shall make one point clear; namely, the precise spot where Carraways pronounced his consent. Well, then; it was exactly opposite the Royal Exchange, under the shadow of the grasshopper. No bad emblem of a poor yet cheerful lover, with little but hope and blithe spirits to begin the world upon.

Nevertheless—says somebody—an odd neighbourhood for men to ask and give in marriage. Well, it may be. Still, Hymen has been known to have his walk on 'Change, as well as common merchants; and what is more, with as fine a sense of profit and loss, as though in boyhood he had sat on the same form and thumbed the same arithmetic with Mercury.

And Carraways, true to his promise, presented himself at Jericho's house. The Man of Money felt a joyous revenge as he eyed the ruined merchant's card. It was very natural to Jericho. Gilbert Carraways, the beggar, had treated him in the most shameful—the most insolent spirit. The poor wretch had, in no way, acknowledged the supremacy of his old friend's wealth. No; his studied silence, his absence from the house, conveyed the contemptuous feeling of the pauper towards the rightful majesty of money. To be sure, Jericho had not offered assistance; certainly not; it was not his place to undraw his purse-strings, if people — ruined people — had not the due humility to ask it. But now—there could be no doubt of it—Carraways was come to beg for aid: he was at length taught by suffering a proper reverence for cash. And with this thought, Jericho armed himself to receive him. We write knowingly—armed himself. For as carefully, as cunningly as ever knight endued his frame with plates of steel or brass,—so did Jericho hang upon that thin, cold, shivering soul of his, the tremendous panoply of bank paper.

It is a curious sight—is it not?—to see the Man of Money sternly awaiting the advent of the rude, forgetful beggar. "Show him in," brays Jericho to the servant. John quits the room, to serve up the pauper. But two minutes pass—and there sits Solomon Jericho dreadful in his arms of money: his visage sharp and cruel, newly whetted, gleaming with scorn. The fat, ruddy, good-tempered face—with meat and wine in the look of it—that was wont to glow and grin at Carraways' board, is prematurely old, and shrunk, and sharpened; the hungry outline of felonious age.

Carraways enters the room. "Gracious heaven! Why, what is this?" For never since the merriment at the Hall, had Carraways and Jericho met. Never, of course, since Carraways departed this life in the gazette, had he seen the Man of Money. Therefore was the merchant astounded at the thing that sat before him—for Jericho did not rise to his old friend; oh no—he knew the prerogative of money better than that—and therefore, in his own natural way did Carraways give utterance to his wonderment. "Is it possible?"

"I believe, sir," said Jericho, and contempt wrinkled his face, and his voice croaked frog-like—"I believe I see Gilbert Carraways, who was a merchant?"

"Who was a merchant, and is Gilbert Carraways still," said the old man.

"Late of Jogtrot Hall?" said Jericho, with a low chuckle.

"Yes," repeated Carraways clearly, sonorously ringing the words, "late of Jogtrot Hall of Marigolds. Now, of a second floor, of Primrose Place."

"Ha! ha! Well, now, I like that," cried Jericho. "I like a man who can play with fortune. I like a man who, when the wench—she's a queer cat, fortune, isn't she, Mr. Gilbert Carraways?—when she spatters him with mud, can give her as good as she sends. Ha! ha! Well, if you have been covered with dirt, you are merry still. But, why haven't you come to see me?" asked Jericho with a sneer.

"Because of the dirt, Mr. Jericho. You see, you ride upon fortune's wheel; now I only get the mud from it."

"Very good," said the patron Jericho. "And I'm glad you can try to make a joke, Mr. Carraways; it must be a great comfort to a poor man. Why, now I can understand how a beggar of a cold night, if he can only muster up heart enough to make a joke, how it must be as good as a truss of straw to him; mus'n't it, eh, Mr. Carraways?"

"'Pon my word, Mr. Jericho, I haven't yet tried the experiment. And I do hope you'll never be brought to it; otherwise, I do think—try as you may—you'll sleep plaguy coldly. But I didn't come here to talk in this idle fashion."

"I hope not," said Jericho, sharpening his malice with his best might. "I hope you came to tell me when you propose to see us at Jogtrot Hall. By the way, I'm going to change the name."

"I hope so," said Carraways very calmly.

"Yes; my friend the Duke of St. George—do you know the Duke?—my friend has promised to give me a new name for it. Though I think, out of compliment to him, I shall call it George and Garter Lodge. You know, Mr. Gilbert Carraways, there's no telling what one may come to."

"No, Solomon Jericho," said the merchant. "Yet, just now, you must have one comfort; you can't come to less than you are." Jericho called up all his thunder to his brows. "Surely," said Carraways tranquilly, as though he was speaking of some monstrous abortion of nature—"surely, 'tis wonderful! Why, my good man"—

"Good man!" roared Jericho.

"My good man," and Carraways doggedly repeated the epithet, "where do you put your heart? Why, it can't be as big as a poppy-seed. Do you ever walk out in the air! If so, pray put a gold bar or so in your pockets, or some day the wind will take you up—carry you into the sky. And who knows! Some future astronomer—if I remember my schooling right, the sort of thing has been done—some astronomer may make a constellation of a bank-note."

"I see," said Jericho, with the most vigorous expression of pity. "I see, you're a free-thinker. Bank-notes in the sky! Poor man! Poverty has made you an atheist."

"Not so," said Carraways placidly. "Indeed, not so. Strange as it may seem to you, poverty has made me a believer in more goodness than I dreamt of before. However, I didn't come to talk of that."

"I suppose not," said Jericho.

"But, bless me!" cried the persevering Carraways, "how thin you are! Why, you *can* have no bowels."

Mr. Jericho said nothing. He merely drew himself up, using a snaky motion of the head to express his silent contempt of the doubt. And silence was best. What spoken answer would have better met such unbelief?

"But as I say," repeated Carraways, "I didn't come to talk about that. I come—now attend to me, if you please, Solomon Jericho"—and Jericho fell flat against the back of his chair, astounded at the pauper's impudence—"attend to me. I didn't come to talk of that. I came here, at once, to renounce all right and title, for me and mine by gift or will now and for evermore, —all right, I say, to a shilling of your money."

"I think," said Mr. Jericho, suddenly recovering himself, "I think you give yourself a very needless trouble."

"Well, I hope so," answered Carraways. "Still, I would not risk a mistake. Your son-in-law"—

"Hm!" said Jericho, and with studied sarcasm. "Son-in-law! Yes; the law bears very hard on us, now and then."

"Has proposed to marry my Bessy. I have consented; and after what I've said, I suppose, Mr. Jericho, you can have no objection to the match?"

"Really, Gilbert Carraways," replied the Man of Money, smiling the while, "why should I? Your conditions are so advantageous, that I should be a fool as well as a monster to come between two doting hearts. All I can say is, I wish you joy of the young gentleman."

"I have every faith in him," said Carraways. "Perhaps, Mr. Jericho, you will break the matter to Basil's mother? I need not intrude upon the lady's better employment. We leave England in about a fortnight."

"What! the young couple and all?" cried Jericho; "and where may you be bound for?"

"The antipodes," answered Carraways, very blithely.

"A capital determination, Gilbert. As you've been turned topsy-turvy here, why going to the antipodes is, perhaps, the shortest way of putting you on your legs again." Here the servant answered the bell, rang by the Man of Money. "Beg Mrs. Jericho to come to me," said the husband.

"Good morning," cried Carraways, rising. "I would rather not see the lady. I'll leave the explanation in your hands. 'Twill come better from you. Much better. Well,"—and Carraways paused before Jericho, and staringly read him up and down—"you *are* thin! Why, you must have no more blood than a cucumber, Solomon. To think that a man should be so rich—ha! what luck you've had in platina, to be sure—so rich and so meagre! Talk of the Wandering Jew, why if you live long enough, you'll be known as the Wandering Bank-note. Dear me! Well, you'd be very curious under a microscope—very curious. Good morning, good morning." And Carraways bustled from the presence of the Man of Money, who sat speechless and confounded by the easy insolence of the pauper. Never, perhaps, since the first piece of metal was stamped as the go-between of man and man, had the dignity of wealth been so impudently put upon. In the savageness of his injured majesty, Jericho could have brained the offender with a bag of money—dashed him in little pieces with a golden thunderbolt; an article with which Plutus often beats the iron of the bigger Jupiter.

"He is gone now—the pauper's departed," said Jericho scornfully to his wife, as she entered.

"Who is gone? And whom can you speak of? A pauper, and here!" Mrs. Jericho would as soon have thought to see a polecat basking on the hearth-rug. "Pauper!"

"That fellow Carraways," said Jericho, and his lips widened at the name as at a filthy drug.

"Oh! I suppose the old story with such people. Came for money?" said his wife.

"Not he; an impudent, blustering scoundrel. Came here to shake his rags in my face, and show how very proud he was of them. Would you believe it? He had the brazen effrontery to come here—here—to renounce my offer of money, and that before it was made."

"Dear me! Poor man!" said Mrs. Jericho, with a look and voice of pity. "Insane, of course."

"No—not he. Not more mad than thousands of people. For it's wonderful to think how near conceit is to insanity, and yet how many folks are suffered to go free and foaming with it. Conceit, Sabilla; mere conceit in a rabid state. Of all pride, the worst is the pride of beggary. Of all madness, that madness is the worst and the most disgusting that, squatted upon a dunghill, brags of the straw and muck, as though they were gold and velvet."

"Very true, indeed, my dear—beautifully true," said the wife. "But we must make great allowances; when a man is stripped of everything"—

"Well, when he is, it isn't exactly the time for him to brag of the buff he's reduced to."

"My dear!" cried Mrs. Jericho, with the prettiest glance of remonstrance. "My love!"

"Moreover, when a family is stripped of everything," cried Jericho, "I don't think it precisely the family to marry into."

"Why, Solomon, what do you mean?" asked the wife, anxious and foreboding.

"The meaning's as short and as strong as the marriage service. Your hopeful son is going to marry Bessy."

"Impossible! He cannot mean it," cried Mrs. Jericho. "It is a mere folly of youth that he will outlive—that he *must* outlive. The fact is, my dear Jericho, we must send him abroad."

"We needn't trouble ourselves. In a few months he will be directly under my foot." Mrs. Jericho stared. "At the antipodes, my dear; at the antipodes," and Jericho rubbed his hands at the prospect.

"And that Carraways—oh, it's a pretty plan, I see, to provide for the daughter—that Carraways came here to tell you this?"

"With his compliments, or something like 'em, that I should open the matter to you."

"Solomon, my dear Solomon"—and Mrs. Jericho dropt in a chair beneath her maternal feelings—"this is a great blow to our house." Jericho looked confidently; putting his thin hands into his pockets, as though he would imply a conviction that the house was strong enough to bear the shock. "'Twill break my heart, Solomon." Still the husband looked calm and self-possessed. "It will bring me to a premature grave." And still, and still the hopeful spouse blenched not. "A foolish, enthusiastic child—when there was such a path open to him!"

"All the road clean as a whistle to the Court of Queen's Bench," said Jericho.

"No—no. The Duke of St. George's eldest daughter; that beautiful girl, the Lady Malypense—he has only to ask and have; I am certain of it, Solomon. If I know what the human heart is made of"—

"And what is it made of?" inquired Jericho; for in the material of hearts he had a strange interest. "What's the stuff? People differ on the point devilishly." Mrs. Jericho stared. "What do you think I heard? Why, that the heart of Lady Malypense—'twas that bitter fellow Thrush who said it—that her heart was like a jewel cushion; merely a thing to stick finery upon." Mrs. Jericho looked wounded incredulity. "Oh, I don't believe it. I only tell you how folks gabble about hearts. Ha! ha! every man talks of his neighbour's heart, as though it was his own watch.—A thing to be seen in all its works; and abused for irregular going. I always laugh when I hear a man talk of another man's heart. And if anybody has a right to laugh, I think it's myself. Ha! ha!" and

Jericho grinned disdainfully; and by such scorn withered, as he believed, the wicked rumour that now and then would gabble against him.

"I am resolved, my love," said Mrs. Jericho, "that this boy shall not sacrifice himself. I have fixed my heart upon a coronet for him, and he shall have it. We deserve nothing less."

"Hm! Do you think, my dear, that coronets hang on pegs that"—

"Nothing more easy," broke in the wife and mother. "He marries the Duke's daughter; he obtains a high appointment at a foreign court; he enters upon diplomacy; I'm sure he was born for it; he always had, as a child, such a taste for mechanics. I only wish I'd kept the mouse-trap he invented when he was six years old. Depend upon it, he's a born ambassador, my dear."

"Isn't marked anywhere with the name of the court, eh?" asked Jericho.

"Now, my love, I adore your wit; but do respect a mother's feelings. Consider, Jericho. As I say, he marries Lady Malypense. He is sent abroad. Our politics are in a tangle somewhere—in Egypt, or Greece, or Belgium, or the Sandwich Islands—'tis all the same—and Basil winds the affair off as cleanly as a skein of silk. Then, of course, he is ennobled; he has somehow saved his country; and, choosing an estate from the map of England, it is bought for ever and for ever for him by a grateful people, and he takes his seat among the lords spiritual and temporal—a peer of the realm. I'm sure of it, from his genius; though I never named it before. Certain."

"Well," said Jericho, satirically, "there's something in it. And yet to consider a peer in his robes and coronet—well, it must be confessed 'tis a mighty grand thing to come out of a mousetrap."

"Not at all," said Mrs. Jericho, "peerages have come of much smaller matters. And, in fact, my love, this intended marriage—this folly—this sacrifice must, at any cost, be prevented."

"As you please; but for my part, I think you'd better let matters take their course."

"Solomon!" cried the wife, in the voice of reproach.

"And as for a peerage, why, where Basil's going, he may choose the rank he best likes; earl, marquess, duke.—And what's more, he can have himself tattooed, dog-cheap, with garters on both legs, and any number of orders." And Jericho laughed at his own wit, with the partiality of a parent.

Mrs. Jericho visited the scorner with one scathing glance of anger; then half in pity, half in contempt, she cried—"Mr. Jericho, you are not a mother." And it must be confessed the Man of Money bore the information with pattern tranquillity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Poor mother! She had a double task to do; double and contrary. To carry a daughter to the altar, and to tear a son from its perilous precincts. Monica wondered that Agatha—but then she was always such a selfish, giddy thing!—would not insist upon deferring her marriage with the Baronet until her elder sister should wed her beloved. For Candituft had made good, seeming good, his cause of delay. He had suddenly discovered some dormant right to some long-forgotten property; and he would first secure that to lay it as an offering at the feet of his bride. Monica, in her warm affection, would have gladly married at once, content to wait for after prosperity as it might follow; but her mother thought it best to tarry. Great good might come of a little delay; and Mr. Jericho could not be hurried to name the exact amount of dowry. Now, with respect to Agatha, the case was wholly different. She had not her sister's strength of mind; and the Baronet was in the full enjoyment of his full fortune; moreover, with a liberality worthy of imitation, he would have been content to marry Agatha even with no other dowry than the first bride brought to the first bridegroom.

Therefore Jericho's house hummed in every nook and corner with the note of preparation; with the tuning prelude to hymeneal song. Nevertheless, in Jericho's house great and torturing was the sacrifice of heart. For was it nothing for Monica to plate her anxious face with smiles; to hover about her sister with looks and words of gentle meaning; of sweet congratulation, when her own breast was misery? Was it nothing to gather a marriage garland for another, when she was yet smarting from nettles? Nothing to forego the robe of the bride and to don the meaner garments—made robes of sorrow and humiliation by disappointment—of the bridesmaid?

And there was another victim, another heroine who, with the fortitude of an Amazon, would smile at self-suffering.—We mean, the Hon. Miss Candituft. Can it be believed that that heroic young lady consented to be second bridesmaid to her rival? Of course, the simple Agatha dreamt not of the agony she inflicted when she prayed such grace of her bosom friend; the rather that the devotion was accorded with the sweetest, the most touching alacrity. Agatha was to wear the nuptial wreath, and Miss Candituft the willow. Nevertheless, the rejected one would carry it like a martyr, turning the reproach to glory.

Our Man of Money, absolved of the liability of dowry, was in the best of moods. His opinion of the merits of Hodmadod continually increased, though Candituft had somehow to pay for the growth. The Baronet became every day a finer fellow; Candituft every day a meaner dog. The excellence accorded to one was remorselessly taken from the other. Thus, pending the nuptial preparation, Hodmadod was the favoured creature at the hearth of Jericho, whilst Candituft was coldly allowed an unconsidered corner. Nevertheless, Candituft had too much benevolence, too much affection for the brotherhood of man, to resent the neglect. Indeed, how should he, since he would not behold it? Some men will not see an affront, even when big as a street-door in their face: as there have been philosophers, so raised above human weakness, who have not discovered when and where they were kicked.

Now let us for a while leave the nuptial loves, busied with the best and the finest, at Jericho House; and look in upon a certain second floor, in Primrose Place.

It is plain enough that Basil has told his story—won his wife. The happy, altered looks of Bessy speak a new and deep content of heart. Indeed, every person present—there are four women, all busy, hence the room at Primrose Place may be considered full—gives indication of a coming ceremony. Bessy is at work, it would appear with all her heart in her sewing.—And Bessy's mother is earnest, grave, in her appeal to the better judgment of Mrs. Topps who, it is plain, has just returned upon her errand, bringing a skein of silk that can in no way be made to match with the colour of the piece to be made up. Miss Barnes is appealed to—Miss Barnes is the young sempstress, the lodger of the attic, who all unconsciously received the benison of Basil, and who has come down to assist in the work—and Miss Barnes joins her verdict against Mrs. Topps; who, a little vexed with herself, ties her riband strings with an angry snatch, and descends to amend her serious error, by changing the skein.

The most innocent and the most hardened bachelor of threescore, brought into the room, would at once divine the sort of work prepared by those three women. He would at once know their cutting and their sewing to be spells preparatory to the tying of a knot that should, for the term of natural life, hold tight together two fellow creatures. The women worked so earnestly, so readily; whilst unseen little loves fluttered up and down; now running along the edge of a hem, and now giving a flourishing caper with some final stitch.

The room—Mrs. Carraways had a dozen times said as much—was in a dreadful litter. Calicos and flannels, and stuffs, and brown holland, and cotton webs with blue stripes, lay heaped about, in very homely contrast to the pretty lilac-coloured satin carefully worked at by Miss Barnes; a satin that Bessy would now and then glance at as though she felt towards it a living tenderness. And still looking, she seemed all the happier with every look.

And Mrs. Carraways seemed much amended. She appeared to have set aside her anxious aspect, and taken, as her husband jovially said, a new lease of heart. And so, she worked with happy zeal; and even hummed an old, old tune, as now and then she looked about her, and her eye rested, now upon a canvas bag, now upon a hat of tarpaulin,—things that, telling her of the long, long voyage to the other side of the world, made her only a few days ago sick with apprehension.

There was a sudden pause—a perfect silence. And then a carriage whirled up Primrose Place, and stopt short at the door.

"Who can that be?" cried Mrs. Carraways, with a look of dread, and laying down her work. Miss Barnes immediately went to the window, and fluently enough described the brilliant carriage, and the many-coloured liveries.

"I thought so," cried Mrs. Carraways, turning pale, "it's Mr. Jericho." As she spoke the smitten knocker chattered—for it was a modest knocker, too light and small to thunder—through the house.

"No," cried Miss Barnes. "Not Mr. Jericho. A lady."

"Mrs. Jericho!" exclaimed Bessy, becoming nervous—looking very pale in her turn; and casting a strange, anxious glance at the lilac-coloured satin laid down by Miss Barnes. "Is she alone?"

"Quite alone," said Miss Barnes; and without another word, the sempstress gathered up her work, and left the room.

In another moment, Susan entered with Mrs. Jericho's card. "Show the lady up stairs," said Mrs. Carraways in a very twitter—"and say, we will see her directly." Susan descended upon her mission, and Mrs. Carraways and Bessy ran to their several rooms, liks startled rabbits to their burrows.

Mrs. Jericho slowly ascended the stairs, and with prodigious dignity entered the second floor front. "Missus Carraways, mum, will be with you directly," said Susan, who, in her way, was a little flustered; inasmuch as she had been suddenly summoned from peeling turnips to wipe her hands for Mrs. Jericho's card.

Mrs. Jericho stood alone in the apartment which, in all its details, she set herself with her best intelligence, to read. Very speedily she divined the meaning of the various articles about her; the checked shirting; the plaids; the tarpaulin; with here and there some tin utensil, bright and new for travel. They made her sad, melancholy. She could have almost wept; for somehow, she seemed to see in everything the loss of Basil. Pride was sinking; affection rising in her heart; when her eye glanced upon a piece of white satin—perhaps, it was for a bonnet, we cannot say—and in that white, unspotted web, her woman's shrewdness read a whole history. Instantly she was herself; more than ever herself: full to overflowing with the wrongs of a mother. In that bit of white satin, did Mrs. Jericho read—as she firmly believed—the fatal marriage warrant of her son, her eldest born.

Mrs. Carraways had, of course, to change her cap. Such was her first intention; the serious purpose that had sent her flying to her room. However, let no woman say she will at a pinch change her cap and nothing more. For Mrs. Carraways had no sooner entered her room, and caught a bit of herself in her glass, than she was convinced she must also change her gown. She cared nothing for Mrs. Jericho; she had ceased to have respect or esteem for her; nevertheless, it was due to herself "not to be seen a figure." These thoughts engaged Mrs. Carraways, as her fluttered hand, like the last minstrel's, wandered among the strings. At length, however, in the best cap and gown that fortune had left her, Mrs. Carraways appeared before her visitor.

Mrs. Jericho did not affect cordiality. She made no attempt to excuse her absence—her neglect of old acquaintance. Mrs. Jericho was too wise a woman: knew too well the person with whom she had to confer. No: she would not attempt to shirk her ingratitude; but—if we may say as much—at once took the scorpion by the tail.

"Mrs. Carraways, you will probably understand why we have not met since our mutual circumstances have so completely changed?" Thus, with hardest smile, spoke Mrs. Jericho.

"I would I could understand all things quite as well," said Mrs. Carraways, with cold and steady look.

"It would have been painful to you, painful to myself," said Mrs. Jericho.

"And you were quite right," answered the broken lady, "to spare at least one of us."

Mrs. Jericho waived her head and arm, as much as to intimate that all needful preface being done, she might at once begin the subject-matter. "Do you know what brings me here, Mrs. Carraways?"

"I think, madam, I can guess," was the ready answer.

"It is this, madam," said Mrs. Jericho, with her best thunder, raising the white satin. "This!"

Mrs. Carraways did not for one moment affect surprise. No: to the astonishment of the sonorous Mrs. Jericho, she calmly replied—"I thought so."

Mrs. Jericho immediately disposed her soul for self-enjoyment. The said soul felt a yearning for lofty exercises; and with good reason; it had so long obeyed the soul of Jericho—aggrandised, sublimated by money—that it longed to assert its natural importance; an importance that, at the commencement of this history—if the reader recollects as much—was made sufficiently evident. Mrs. Jericho's majesty had been confined, doubled up, like a snake in a box; and it was not to be wondered at that, the occasion offering, it should desire to come out and air itself, showing its fine proportions. The husband Jericho had somehow been the snake-charmer; now Mrs. Carraways was weak and ignorant as babyhood.

"And may I ask you, madam, what you propose by inveigling a young man"—

"Really, Mrs. Jericho," said Mrs. Carraways, and even with the most placid manner she managed to rise above the violence of her visitor—"really, I must hear nothing of this. Mr. Carraways has, I believe, communicated with Mr. Jericho; and I take it, as they are agreed"—and Mrs. Carraways was most provoking in her humility—"as they are of accord, the less we women interfere the better."

"That may be your degraded opinion of the rights of women, Mrs. Carraways; of the rights of a mother. Happily, however, I have other notions; other feelings. To be sure, you may very calmly contemplate the marriage of your daughter with a husband of untold affluence—of untold affluence, ma'm."

"Untold? I believe so; yes, untold," observed Mrs. Carraways, very quietly.

Mrs. Jericho would not pause in her course to notice the sarcasm. "But, madam, it is otherwise to the mother whose child, whose only son, is to be lured, entrapped, and cruelly sacrificed to the hopeless condition of a penniless wife."

"I assure you, madam,"—Mrs. Carraways' cheek tingled a little; but she had made up her mind to be cool, and cool she would be though—as she afterwards phrased it—her blood was boiling.—"I assure you, Mr. Carraways has no thought of Mr. Pennibacker's probable, I might say, his problematical wealth;

though, no doubt, it must be immense, if all the stories be true about the mines of platina."

"My dear Mrs. Carraways,"—that lady stared at the sudden courtesy—"let us understand one another. Mr. Jericho has, I can answer for it, every wish to serve the family. You are about to make a voyage; about to begin the world anew. Just grant us one favour, and there is nothing we will not do for you." It was thus, without effort, Mrs. Jericho subsided from the imperious to the polite, when she found it best to sink to an advantage.

"You are very kind; very suddenly kind," said Mrs. Carraways; "but I think even now we are so rich—yes, so very rich, that it is impossible Mr. Jericho can assist us."

"Come, come," said Mrs. Jericho, laying her hand upon Mrs. Carraways' hand, and the good lady smiled a little sourly at the action—"we are both mothers; and must consider our children's happiness. As for Basil, he is quite a boy; absurdly young to take a wife. No fixed affections. A very boy."

"He is young; very young," confessed Mrs. Carraways.

"Do not suppose, my dear madam, that I would thwart his affections when pronounced and real. And as for any inequality of fortune, why, after all, I would not weigh my boy's heart against money. Certainly not. So pray, my dear Mrs. Carraways, think what I said about fortune, as so much idle temper; mere heat of words, with no meaning; none, I assure you." And then Mrs. Jericho, in the simplest manner possible, asked—"Pray, when do you sail?"

"In about a fortnight, I believe," was the answer, and Mrs. Carraways could not repress a sigh.

"So soon?" cried Mrs. Jericho, and her face darkened.—"Well, that is early—very early. Now, dear Mrs. Carraways"—and Mrs. Jericho drawing up her chair, became impressive, then pathetic—"what I ask for the happiness of both our children is only this.—Leave Basil here; let him remain a year or two with us; and then, if his affection still holds for your daughter, why, I'm sure the young people shall have my—my blessing. Say two years only, my dear creature."

"I can say nothing," replied Mrs. Carraways. "Gilbert has pledged his word."

"A pledge that may be easily removed, explained; anything. All I ask for Basil"—cried his mother with new energy—"is the trial of two years."

"A trial for me," cried Basil, hurrying into the room, "my dear lady, on what account? Ha! ha! Susan told me you were here, and I lost no time to ask your blessing," and Basil bent his head, and kissed his mother's hand. Then, he gaily asked—"Where 's father ?"

"I thought it best to come alone," answered Mrs. Jericho.

"Oh ! I wouldn't trouble Mr. Jericho for the world ; I meant my other father,—father Carraways." Mrs. Jericho frowned and bit her lip. "I thought he'd be home before me. We've had such a ramble ; and—my dear lady—we have selected two such ploughs. Fit to plough Elysium."

"Ploughs !" cried Mrs. Jericho. "In heaven's name, Basil, what do you mean ?"

"Mean ! The noblest meaning in the world, my dear mother. The first meaning of the first man,—work, mother ; work. Two such ploughs ! The true philanthropic iron," cried Basil.

"My poor boy ! you must be mad," and Mrs. Jericho sighed and shook her head.

"Not mad, my dear lady ; only wondrous happy. You see, mother, we 've been shopping. Delightful employment, you 'll own that ? Been cheapening a few of Vulcan's nick-nacks with which we propose to set-off nature. Such ploughs, I say ; fancy took a flight into the future, and I thought I heard the corn wave to and fro while I looked at 'em. Such axes ! How they will startle the wood-nymphs ! Such hoes, such rakes, such pitchforks ! I never felt so proud in my life, as while I handled 'em. Every tool seemed to me at once the weapon and the ornament of independence. With such magnificent arms a true man may go forth and conquer the wilderness ; making the earth smile with the noblest of victories."

"Rhapsodist !" cried Mrs. Jericho. "And you can leave home, can quit fortune, family, every grace and happiness of life for the whim of a desert ?"

"Grace and happiness a man may, if he will, always carry with him. The most valuable of luggage, they pack very easily. Desert ! Look here, my dear mother—see," and Basil took from his pocket a map, which unfolding, he spread upon the table. "Quite a land of plenty ! Earth is here so kind, that just tickle her with a hoe and she laughs with a harvest."

Mrs. Jericho said nothing ; but shook her head and sighed. And here Mrs. Carraways quietly withdrew.

"Look here, my dear mother," and Basil traced the map with his finger, "see, here's where we shall disembark. Here, you see is Port Pancake. Here is Van Dumplings Land—now we skirt along here, till we come to Smokejack Point. Then we trend to the left by Pudding Mount, until we break upon Sea Pie Bay. Then we at once get into the Lavender."

"Lavender !" echoed Mrs. Jericho feebly.

"Yes, a home in the Lavender is where we are bound for—and then, you see—and then"—

For a minute Mrs. Jericho's tears had fallen upon the map; Basil would not see them; at length his voice thickened, then fairly broke, and the next moment son and mother were sobbing in each other's arms.

"And you can leave me—you can quit us?" said the mother. "Oh Basil! can you leave us?"

"What remains for me,—what can I do? I shall be better away—much better."

"Wherefore better? Have you not position—fortune? All that should make you happy?"

"My position, splendid serfdom"—answered Basil—"my fortune, money that would damn me."

"Basil," said his mother, startled by the passion of her son. "Your father's money!"

"I would have avoided this; I hoped to avoid it,—but mother, I suspect your husband." The wife drew herself up; nevertheless, a something in her heart seemed to baffle her. "There are odd tales told of Mr. Jericho. Have an eye upon him. I don't believe the words in their vulgar, nursery meaning; but it is said that Mr. Jericho's mine, whence he derives his wealth, is the very mine that some day"—

Basil's mother grew pale. She tried to speak; and then to smile, as though in scorn and utter incredulity.

"I only repeat the rumour; of course, mother, I give no faith to bonds of brimstone. Still, I should like to be assured of the source of his means. Why, mother, you have eyes. You cannot, if you would, be blind to the daily, hourly waste of the man. Like a waxen figure made by a witch, he dwindles—dwindles. People say, too, such waste is the tribute exacted by the devil."

"Basil!" shrieked the frightened woman.

"And, I take it," answered the young man with solemn voice, and saddest looks, "I take it to be so. Come, you must hear me out. I shall not offend again; and you must hear me. What are the ravages of conscience but tribute paid to evil? What the pains, the tremors, the heartquakes that I know the man endures—for I have watched him—what are all, but the devil's tribute?"

"You are a dreamer—an enthusiast—a foolish boy," cried Mrs. Jericho, laughing and shuddering.

"Well, we shall see—we shall see. We will talk no more of it," said Basil.

"With all my heart; I am sure I must reproach myself that I have listened so long."

"Yet, a word," said Basil. "I quit England in a fortnight."

"With a wife?" asked the mother, tremulously.

"With a wife," exclaimed Basil, and with the words his heart shone in his face.

"Foolish, imprudent, ungrateful boy!" and the mother wept.

"May you have no worse cause for tears, madam, till we meet again," said Basil, proudly. "But pray hear me. We go to make a house in the wilderness. Yet do not think, my mother, my sisters, are forgotten. No: they shall find a home too."

"In the wilderness?" asked Mrs. Jericho, with contempt.

"In the wilderness," answered Basil, "and bless the solitude that gives them happy shelter from the falsehood of the dreary finery of life. I say, in the wilderness. Once there, what a new hunger you will feel for nature! Well, all shall be prepared for you."

"No, Basil," said the mother mournfully, "we never meet again: mother, sisters, all to you will be as the dead. I suppose you have heard? Agatha marries Sir Arthur, and in a few days."

"If it be so, poor wench!" said Basil. "But I have hope, mother; hope."

"Of course, Basil, you will come to the ceremony?"

"And Bessy?"—inquired Basil. His mother made no answer; Basil calmly continued. "Nevertheless, should the wedding-cup slip from the lip—there are such slips, you know—Aggy shall find that her new sister has thought of her—even, I say, in the wilderness. I shall leave behind those who will watch you"—

"Watch?" cried Mrs. Jericho, impatiently.

"For a kind purpose," said the son. "And you shall see what a house we'll have for you. Oh! you 'll need it. What a garden! What freedom! What a new life of happiness and honour—the life of the husbandman, a life fed by the bounty of earth, and sweetened by the airs of heaven. Good-bye."

"Oh, Basil; we shall meet before you—before"—the mother could say no more.

"Oh, yes; truly yes," and Basil took his mother to his bosom; and the woman's heart flowed in tears—and pride and vanity, and worldly thoughts were, for the moment, conquered. "Will you see Bessy?" asked Basil; his mother responded with a pressure of her arms. In a moment, Bessy—answering the call of Basil—stood, blushing in the room.

Mrs. Jericho felt rebuked, humbled, by the sweet, frank, innocence of the girl. "Bless you, Bessy," she cried; and kissing her, with an effort smiled; then saying, "Basil, you will see me to the door?" hurried down stairs. In a minute, Mrs. Jericho was in her carriage. "Home!" cried Basil, and homewards the lady went. And the figure of Bessy still went with her; the good, happy face of the fair creature that had smiled so sweetly at the tyranny of fortune; that, in the confiding purity of her heart, seemed invulnerable to evil,—the face went with her; and the wife of the Man of Money for the moment blushed for her possessions: felt ashamed of her wealth.

And then she thought of Basil and his young bride in the wilderness: and the next thought sent the recollection of that word—was it scornfully uttered by Basil?—that word "Home" through her brain. Never before had the sound so jarred upon her heart. "Home!" With what sad, sullen thoughts, she now considered that magnificent dungeon; that gorgeous prison, her home. How its splendour came feverishly upon her soul! How little was there in that home that consecrated it from any temple where the creed was money, and the worshipper, the world.

"Home!" a sweet and terrible word. How often may it have made its way into the carriage, sickening youth and beauty with its sound—striking cold misery to the poor, aching heart; some sad, church-bargain, receipted by the priest. How often, the miserable creature, begging at the carriage-door, kneading the mud beneath his naked feet, with all his tattered wretchedness feels no such pang as that word "Home" inflicts upon the seeming felicity he prays to. "Home!" How merrily the hours dance onward! How the heart has forgotten, thrown down its daily load, letting itself be cheated into joy! Still the hours glide on, glowing as they pass, and sorrow is tricked into happiness. And it may be the dream lasts until the dreamer departs. And then the word "Home" is flung, like a snake, to the victim —the daily viper that daily stings.

And whilst we have hammered out this iron sermon upon one kind of home, what a different home have our lovers—Basil and Bessy—already made in the wilderness! Basil has talked of all he has purchased,—ploughs, axes, hammers; all sorts of field implements; and Bessy has listened with an earnestness that tried to understand their separate use. And then Basil had given particular orders for plants and seeds. "For you see, my love," said he, "I intend to take as much of England as we can with us."

"To be sure," cried Bessy. "Oh yes!"

"And so, I've cuttings of raspberry, and currant, and gooseberry; and for flowering shrubs, rhododendrons, and camellias, and roses as various, yes, as the beauty they are the type of."

"And I too have seen to a great many seeds," said Bessy. "Above all, I've not forgotten the heart's-ease."

"That"—said Basil, taking a kiss as the best comment—"that, Bessy, I may be always sure of."

CHAPTER XIX.

Mr. Jericho, as in gratitude bound, was proud of the friendship of the Duke of St. George. If, at any time, Solomon thought of the peerage—and we cannot deny that his soul did now and then hover about the House of Lords—it was his belief that to the high party interest of the duke he should owe the strawberry leaves. Besides, Jericho had his own personal claims. He was religiously observant of the wishes of the Minister, and—if a dog could vote—not even that grateful animal would have barked aye or no with better docility; or even with quicker intelligence. Again, it was only too plain to Jericho's intimate friends that he was dying for his country. "Parliament is killing that dear man," was the frequent cry of Candituft. "He is wasting piecemeal," was the complaint of Mizzlemist. "All his flesh," cried Mrs. Jericho, the tears peeping from her eyes, "all his flesh goes into those filthy blue books." And this belief became a very popular superstition among the crowd of folks who visited the Man of Money. His blood and brain, aye the marrow of the senator, all was consumed to reappear in statistical details: yes, his very soul might be recognised by friendship, sympathetic and imaginative, sacrificed to printer's ink. And—as Colonel Bones would ask—"What cared the people of Toadsham for the devotion of their member?" Whilst Commissioner Thrush declared that to stick by his seat with the tenacity of Jericho, was not to sit leisurely and like a gentleman for a borough, but to be impaled in Parliament. To be sure, Mrs. Jericho was again and again promised by sanguine friends that "Mr. Jericho must some day have a coronet." But his wife, loath to be comforted, would again fall upon her husband's daily waste. "A coronet! Yes; a coronet is all very well, but if the dear fellow dwindles and dwindles in Parliament as he has done, why—poor creature—when the coronet comes, he'll have no head to put in it." An impossible case, of course; and only to be received as the morbid apprehension of conjugal affection.

It was a great pity that Jericho's intimacy with the Duke did not begin in early youth. His Grace himself sweetly confounded Jericho by more than once protesting such regret. "My dear Solomon," his Grace would say, and at first all the blood in Jericho's body seemed turned into ichor by the condescension, "My dear Solomon; I only wish we had met at College. However," the Duke would add with fortitude, "we must make the best of the time that remains to us." And certainly, Jericho might take to himself this comfort: at no period of his life could his friendship have been so useful to St. George as at the very moment of his acquaintance. The fact is, the Duke was in debt. Debt, indeed, was his family distinction. All his ancestors, from Hugh de Gorge—who, to give the slip to his Norman tailor, came with William to Hastings, and cut for himself a good slice of land with his carving sword—all St. George's ancestors were in debt. They were all born to prodigious bills, just as other high families are born to thick lips and elliptic noses. Therefore, we say, Jericho was now a cherished guest at Red Dragon House. Two days before the marriage of Agatha, the Man of Money passed the greater part of the night there: it was four in the morning when he returned home. Of course, Mrs. Jericho thought him in Parliament; wasting himself, in her own impatient words, upon those wretches of Toadsham. "And what would they care if he killed himself outright in their service? Why, they'd erect nothing to his memory. Not so much as his statue in gilt gingerbread." At this Mr. Jericho would smile incredulously; and in his bitter way, declare a female patriot to be the rarest of animals.

It was late, very late when Jericho appeared in his library. The servant, waiting at the breakfast-table, eyed his master with looks of dismay. The honest fellow's teeth chattered as though he was compelled to wait upon a ghost. Jericho observed the condition of the lacquey, and, affronted by his terror, ordered him to quit the room. And the man, it was afterwards discovered, rushed to his bedchamber, skinned himself of his livery; scratched on his old plain clothes, and—as though he was making off with the silver tea-pot—sneaked stealthily from the house. (That man—if we may quit our story to say as much—that man is now in Bedlam; his hopeless madness a belief that his own face is nothing more than a razor blade. Poor fellow! Evidently possessed by the sharpened visage of Jericho, as it cruelly gleamed upon him from the breakfast-table.)

And there was good reason for this new keenness of the face divine. Ere Jericho quitted Red Dragon House, he had lent upon the most satisfactory mortgage—so any way there was land for his money—no less than five-and-forty thousand pounds to his Grace of St. George. It was a great sacrifice; but the Man of Money could not withstand it. Truly an enormous sacrifice; but it should be the last—the last—the very last. And there was no doubt that the money, lent at such a season, and to such a man, with parliamentary service and the fame of wealth, would bring the peerage: a baronetcy Jericho had already refused. A peerage! Nevertheless, how he had shrunk—how horribly he had dwindled—how wretchedly small he had become to purchase it. Aye,—how small? He would again measure himself: he would know the exact waste. Whereupon Jericho took the silken cord, and passed it round his breast. Why, it would twice encircle him—twice, and a piece to spare. With horror and loathing, Jericho flung the cord in the fire: he would never again take damning evidence against himself. Yet, why should he fear? He lost no strength. On the contrary, as his flesh wasted, his spirit became stronger—his passions fiercer. He had waxed in dignity of soul—in might and vigour of self-assertion. He had wholly lost the weak, easy-tempered part of himself, and was a man of iron will; of all-subduing energy. And perhaps this was the tenor of the compact; the condition of his wealth: that, as he sloughed the fleshy weakness of human nature, his spirit should be strengthened, sublimated to the temper of the diviner creature. His very soul glowed and chuckled at the thought; and thus priding himself, in the triumph of his folly, he sat and smiled a ghastly smile, and rubbed together his long, thin, bloodless hands.

"Why, what's the matter, woman?" suddenly cried the Man of Money. Mrs. Jericho had abruptly entered the room, and shouted astonishment at the spectre of her husband. "What's the matter?" The woman could not answer: she trembled; yet with a frosty smile tried to overcome her look of apprehension. Somehow, too, the strange manner of the man—his eye and voice terrified and thrilled her. "I ask, what's the matter?"

"Nothing, my dear; nothing," stammered the wife; "nothing if you—you are well."

"And why should I not be well? What ails me?" and Jericho frowned and rose erect.

"You were so late at the House, I thought, my love, you must be tired; that is all," murmured Mrs. Jericho. "But my love, here is Sir Arthur," and Sir Arthur Hodmadod—the bridegroom of to-morrow with the happy Agatha—came smiling into the room. Instantly, the smile was struck from his face; he let fall his cane, and as though he had looked upon Gorgon, stood with fixed eyes, dropt jaw, and face of whitest stone. His bride, with instinctive trust, alarmed at the spectre, clutched the coat skirt of her betrothed. Mrs. Jericho trembled anew at this new display of terror; and with heroic effort, tried to rattle the baronet back to himself.

"Well, my dear Sir Arthur; here are you and Agatha, like coupled doves. Well, bless ye both," and the gallant woman affectionately patted the cheek of her future son, and gave an affectionate, but sharpish pinch to her daughter's cheek, possibly to bring back the blood. "I only hope, my loves, that this time twenty years you'll keep as close together. But I have no doubt of it, none;" and she violently shook Hodmadod's hand, and gave another pinch to the other cheek of Agatha.

"No doubt of it," stammered Hodmadod. "Always domestic and always together, like knife and fork; when I say knife and fork, of course I mean cup-and-saucer."

"To be sure," cried Mrs. Jericho very cordially.

"My dear sir," and Hodmadod looked anxiously, warily at Jericho; "heavy debate last night; when I say heavy, I mean, you spoke of course. What a shame it is, Mr. Jericho, that they never print your speeches. Shameful. They print much worse, I'm sure. Didn't divide till three, I perceive. And with committees and all, it's butchering work. When I say butchering work, I mean that I look upon the House of Commons as quite a slaughter-house. Best lives of the country sacrificed there. Why, now, how ill you look!"

"Do you think so?" growled Jericho.

"Shocking ill. If I were you, I should take the Chiltern Hundreds. When I say, Chiltern Hundreds, I mean medical advice; if not, Parliament will kill you. Kill a bullock; when I say a bullock, I don't mean that you're a"—

"Sir Arthur Hodmadod," roared Jericho; and the baronet was in a tremor, for he had not, though he had industriously essayed, talked himself into courage. "Sir Arthur!" Mrs. Jericho was in new twitters, and Agatha, about to faint, crept closer to her love—"Sir Arthur, I say."

"Well, sir," answered the baronet very tremulously.

"I believe you marry that young lady to-morrow?"

"It is my rapturous destiny," said Hodmadod, affecting a smile.—"When I say rapturous"——

"I know," roared the Man of Money, with his best brutality. "Now, understand, once and for all, if I permit a jackass to marry into my family, I do not suffer him always to bray to me." And with this Mr. Jericho stalked from the room.

"Jackass!" exclaimed Hodmadod—"I must have this explained. When he says jackass of course he means"—

"Oh, dear no!" cried Mrs. Jericho, crushing the inference in its shell—its goose-shell.

"Not for a moment, Arthur; don't believe it," interposed Agatha; and, at the touch of her hand, the lion-hearted Arthur dropt his mane, and the wrathful fire died in his pacific eyes.

"It's all the debates," cried Mrs. Jericho. "They're wearing him to a shadow. He'll never be himself so long as he's in that horrid Commons. He *must* retire into the Upper House. He's losing all his substance in Acts of Parliament. And what—what indeed does anybody care? Except ourselves," said Mrs. Jericho, with self-correction, "except ourselves. And, dear Sir Arthur, I know your friendship—I know your sympathy: that Mr. Jericho, in all his trials, in all his anxieties for the country, that he may always depend upon."

"Always," responded Sir Arthur; with the better alacrity that he remembered he was about to leave England for a year; or, as his bride had more prettily expressed it to a friend, "for twelve honeymoons."

Mrs. Jericho left the lovers to themselves. We shall imitate the considerate example of Mrs. Jericho. We will not break upon the last hour of single life left them to enjoy together. The last hour: for when next they meet, they meet in the very handsome and very florid structure of St. Shekel's, there to be made one by the welding ministration of Doctor Cummin.

About to quit Jericho House, Sir Arthur thought himself especially favoured by fortune to meet Doctor Stubbs upon the door-step. "Sir Arthur," said the courteous physician, "I wish you great joy, though in advance."

"You're a kind creature, Stubbs; when I say kind, I was just thinking of you. That is, when I say thinking of you, I mean"—

"My dear Sir Arthur," and Stubbs looked professionally anxious, "what *is* the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter.—When I say nothing, I never felt so odd in my life. Never was married before you know; and upon my word, looking at the church steeple there, it goes up and down, and I feel all over sea-sick. Did you feel so, eh?" and Hodmadod took the arm of Stubbs, and turning from the door, the bridegroom and physician walked gently onward. "Quite sea-sick," repeated the Baronet.

"It's nothing;" said the physician, "merely your nerves."

"That's what I said to myself; only my nerves. Still, it isn't pleasant, is it, going to be married? Not but what I shall be happy. Eh? Don't you think I shall be happy?" asked the Baronet; for in all things he liked to be confirmed by another opinion; he had, perhaps, so little faith in his own.

"Miss Pennibacker was made to—to—to make you happy: no doubt of it," said Stubbs.

"When you say made, of course you mean ordered for me.—And when—but bless me! how that steeple does go up and down, and how my nerves—they are my nerves you say!—tingle too."

"Well, well, we must put that all right," said Doctor Stubbs. "It won't do for you to take nerves with you to the altar, to-morrow. It's the bride's privilege to have nerves. You must be rock."

"I should like it, above all things," said Hodmadod. "Ought to be rock at such a time, eh ?"

"A piece of manly adamant," responded Doctor Stubbs, and his eye twinkled. "Well, that can be done. That can be done," repeated the Doctor slowly, the while he wrote with pencil upon a leaf of his pocket-book. "Here, Sir Arthur. This will brace you up like a drum," and the Doctor, tearing the prescription from his book, handed it to the tremulous bridegroom.

Sir Arthur cast his eye upon the medicinal Latin ; muttered bits of the written spells—"*Morph : Acetat. Hyoscyami. Digitalis. Ætheris Sulphuric.* Yes ; I see"—and the patient smiled, much comforted. "I see ; quite like a drum. Exactly."

"There are two doses," said Stubbs. "You will take one the last thing to-night ; and the other when you wake in the morning. That will, no doubt, be early," and Stubbs laughed.

"Oh yes," cried Hodmadod, with joyous burst. "Oh yes ! Up with the first chanticleer. When I say the first chanticleer"—

"To be sure," said Stubbs. "And now, my dear Sir Arthur—why what *is* the matter ?"

"Nothing. When I say nothing, you can't think how that steeple still goes up and down. I'm always sick at sea ; but never felt so sick as now in all my life. Up and down !"

"Aye, aye ; your nerves. Now, pray listen. You must keep yourself very quiet. Because to-morrow"—Stubbs was the smallest of a wag—"to-morrow you have to make a great moral demonstration."

"Very moral. Marriage, you know. Nothing can be more moral. When I say"—

"Yes, I apprehend. Therefore, you must be very quiet. Because your temperament is excitable. You're very impulsive. Your nerves are most delicately strung."

"Quite so. Often thought it. Smallest thing sets 'em tingling. I'm quite like an Eolian harp ; played upon by the least breath. When I say"—

"To be sure. At this crisis you must be particularly careful. Pray attend to me"—the Doctor looked at his watch—"for I'm past my time. When you've taken the medicine, do not on any account suffer yourself to be disturbed. Be most particular in this. You will then have a sweet, refreshing sleep ; and you will wake, as I say, like a drum. God bless you"—and Doctor Stubbs shook the Baronet's hand—"like a drum."

The Doctor returned to make his call at Jericho House, and Hodmadod took his way to his own abode; resolved to shut himself up until summoned by the chimes to his happy fate. Still the church steeple, as he phrased it in his thoughts, went up and down in his head; and he felt an increased sense of the necessity of quietude. With strengthened determination to be tranquil, Hodmadod, arrived at home, summoned his valet to his presence. "Atkins," said Hodmadod, and Atkins stared at the soft, subdued manner of his master. What could ail him? "Atkins, you know what is about to happen to-morrow."—Atkins, responding to what he thought the dejection of the Baronet, looked grave and shook his head. "Now, it is most necessary to my reputation as a man and a rock, Atkins, that I should not be disturbed. You understand?"

"Yes, sir; to be sure, sir; not disturbed, sir," said Atkins.

"Very well. Then you will go yourself, Atkins, and get me that prescription," and Hodmadod gave the document to the suspicious retainer. Yes; suspicious. For Atkins had grave doubts, as he took his way to the chemist's; doubts which his fidelity to his master soon put into language.

"May I be so bold as to ask if there's anything queer in that physic?" asked Atkins, with the best unconcern he could assume.

"No; oh no," said the chemist; and Atkins was greatly relieved. "Merely soothing—merely soothing."

And the evening closed in; and Hodmadod—though he would now and then put his hand to his head, by which it was evident that the steeple was still there—Hodmadod felt calmer and calmer; indeed, on the whole, happy and resigned. And then again he felt so dull and lonely, that he heartily wished the morning was come, and all was well over. Time never moved so heavily. And now the bridegroom ran his fingers along the piano—now he corrected his whiskers in the glass—now he looked at the bracelet that, on the morning, he proposed to clasp about the wrist of his bride. Still the minutes would lag; time would limp, as with a thorn in either foot. Nevertheless, Hodmadod did the best to speed him along. It was the last evening of his celibacy. He would try a little reading. In his time, the Baronet had been a great patron of the ring; but that thoughtless time was over. When his faithful valet appeared with the night-light, Hodmadod was deep in *Boxiana.*

"Everything's ready for the morning," said Atkins, following his master to the room. "Very handsome, sir," said Atkins, with the freedom of an old favourite; "very handsome waistcoat. Must make the lady quite proud of you;" and Atkins looked admiringly at the delicate vest. "No lady could refuse a gentleman in such a waistcoat. Not often, sir, the church sees anything like that."

"Be silent, Atkins," said Hodmadod. "Blockhead! When I say blockhead, I mean ass; and when I say ass, I mean you—Atkins. Do you think marriage consists in waistcoats? When I say waistcoats, do you think the holy and blessed state is made up of—of—satin and—and"—

"Not at all, sir,"—said the faithful Atkins.

"Well, then, be silent, and attend to my last words, or nearly"—Atkins stared—"as a bachelor. I must not be disturbed. I will ring for you; but on no account, and for no purpose whatever, break in upon me. You understand me, Atkins. I have my thoughts to compose—medicine to take—and many things to think of. A great moral demonstration to make, Atkins; when I say a moral demonstration, I have to be a rock to-morrow; adamant—moral adamant, at the altar."

"Must be staggering, sir; 'specially the first time. But you'll go through it, sir,"—said the encouraging Atkins—"go through it, sir; with credit to yourself, and—and with honour to your country."

"Blockhead, go. And you hear, if you suffer me to be disturbed, the world's before you. When I say the world's before you, I mean my door is for ever behind you. Go," and Atkins with a bow and a smile departed. Hodmadod prepared himself for rest. Yet, for a few minutes, he sat before the glass. He took the miniature of Agatha in his hand, and kissed it. Then his eye fell upon the soothing medicine; and as with a new impulse, and pressing the picture, again and again he saluted it. Then, laying it down, he took up the anodyne. He read the direction, translated by the chemist—"*Half to be taken the last thing at night; half, the first in the morning.*" The whole was very little. Very little. A smile of self satisfaction crept over the face of Hodmadod as his eye rested on the bottle. He had made a discovery; had achieved a wise thought, and his face was illuminated in token of the triumph. And still he considered the bottle; and silent, his mind thus talked.

"Very little in the bottle. When I say little, 'twould all go in a wine-glass. Half now, half in the morning! Why shouldn't it be all taken now—all swallowed at once, and be done with? Why make two bites of a cherry? When I say a cherry, I mean physic. It must come to the same thing; must do the same work with the nerves, whether swallowed at once, or at twice. Then, why shouldn't it do double work? Why not do all the bracing now, and have it over? To be sure. Why, what a fool that Doctor Stubbs must be—and after all, he doesn't look so very wise—what a fool he must be to divide the stuff into two. No, no; I shall not separate them;" and Hodmadod, with a laugh, shook the medicine—"I shall not separate 'em," talked his mind—"what the chemist has mixed together, let no man separate;" and, tickled by this timely joke, as he thought it, Hodmadod, with a nod at the miniature, swallowed all the anodyne, and made the best of his way to that bed, which he was to leave on the morning a rock—a piece of adamant—moral adamant.

Magnificently rose the sun, and with the sun rose Agatha.

> "Uprose the sun, and uprose Emily."

At earliest dawn, all Jericho's house was astir; every servant—especially the maids—from the housekeeper to the smallest maid of the kitchen looking upon the day as a day in which she had some most especial interest. Every female heart beat churchwards. We will not dwell upon the thoughts of Agatha; how, when she awoke, she already pictured to herself Arthur animated and hopeful; his face beaming with the like happiness that, she felt it, lightened her own; how she endeavoured to anticipate the hours, to see through the future; to look to eleven o'clock, and behold her bridegroom in the vestry of St. Shekel's; the appointed place of rendezvous, within a few steps—and all a path of flowers—to the altar.

And, we regret to be compelled to confess it, that at the time the bridegroom was fast asleep; not even dreaming of the bride that was up and fluttering from lace to lace—from silk to silk.

Time wore on, and the family of Jericho were assembled—all but Basil. Agatha sighed as she marked his absence; two or three tears came to her eyes; and then she thought of Arthur, and the cruelty of Basil was, on the moment, forgiven and forgotten. Mr. Jericho put his best face upon the day. He looked shining and as full as he well could be, of content. If his face was sharp, it was—for the occasion—polished. Mrs. Jericho had resolved to part with her daughter with dignified fortitude. Monica was all resignation to her own disappointment, and her sister bridesmaid, the Hon. Miss Candituft, pensive but proud; with a furtive look of mischief in her eye, as it fell upon the unconscious Agatha. And all the party were prepared for church.

Atkins had twice or thrice listened at his master's door; and still his master slept. Atkins looked at his watch, and was astounded at the hour. Still the bridegroom slept. Atkins thought he would rouse his master; and then he thought of his master's stern command and threat; thought too of the profits of his place, and therefore let the bridegroom sleep.

The carriages rolled from Jericho House on their way to the church. The white bows shone on the servants; the lily for a minute triumphed in the face of the bride. St. Shekel's opened on the bridal company. The heart of Agatha beat thicker at the church-door.

Atkins again listened at the chamber, again and again; not a sound. The medicine—the drugs! A horrid suspicion—despite of the warranty of the chemist—shot all through the valet. Along every nerve, throughout every bone of his body—as he afterwards declared—a dreadful doubt of double-dealing; of cowardly evasion of the hymeneal engagement by means of poison. Atkins entered the chamber.

The bridal party ascended the steps of St. Shekel's. The looks of Agatha hungered for her love: hungered, though bent upon the church stones. Expectation, to the tips of Agatha's fingers, awaited the hand of Arthur to press *her* hand. The bridal party entered the vestry.

Atkins stept stealthily to the bedside. The bridegroom was in such a sweet, deep sleep, it seemed to Atkins a sin and a shame to wake him to be married.

The bridegroom had not arrived. Agatha looked all round the vestry; again and again scrutinised its dimensions; and still refused to believe the juggling evidence of her senses. "Not arrived!" cried Mr. Jericho, looking fiercely at the clerk. "Impossible!" said Mrs. Jericho. "Extremely ungallant," whispered Monica. "He'll be here in a minute," said the Man-Tamer. "Perhaps," said Miss Candituft, "perhaps he has mistaken the church." The bride, of course, said nothing. "Here he is," cried Mizzlemist, the door opening; and the heart of the bride opening with it. A false alarm. It was not the bridegroom: it was the beadle. The clerk was wanted by Doctor Cummin.

Atkins stood at the bedside, and resolving with himself, determined to wake his master. "Sir, sir, it's late—it's very late, indeed, sir," cried Atkins.

"If the bridegroom doesn't come in five minutes," said the

Man of Money, "I do not think I can permit the bride to stay a moment longer." "Now, my dear," said Mrs. Jericho, "you are so impatient. There must be some strange mistake—perhaps, some accident." "Yes, mamma, I'm sure that's it—some accident," said poor Agatha; and then the tears ran freely down her cheeks. Poor little soul; her heart was breaking; nevertheless, Miss Candituft—cruel bridesmaid!—smiled as in revenge and scorn. "This is infamous!" shouted Mr. Jericho, with every moment waxing wrathful.

"You'll be past the time, sir; you will really," and Atkins shook his master. "I know all about it," grunted Hodmadod. "Steeple still up and down—still in my head," and the bridegroom again lapsed into the depths of sleep. Atkins shook, but shook in vain.

"This appears to me," said Jericho, "a premeditated affront. All a plan to insult your daughter, Mrs. Jericho; to insult the family; to insult me. I wish the devil may"— "Beg your pardon, sir," said the clerk; "but you must remember where you are; can't admit of such language here." Mr. Jericho drew himself up to reply; but could not speak. At length his wordless scorn exploded in a burst of laughter. "This is shameful," cried the clerk. "Brawling in church." "My dear sir, it is vexing," said Mizzlemist with quick knowledge of the ecclesiastical law—"but control your feelings." "And why—why should I control them?" roared Jericho—"I suppose I can afford to pay for them. The bride shall not stay to be insulted; the young lady shall not remain a minute longer." Dear Agatha! Then might be seen the little loves, with blubbered cheeks, sitting squat among her orange flowers; picking bud and blossom, and with sobbings, dropping them upon the vestry floor. And every minute gave new fire to Miss Candituft's eye—new red to her cheek—new fulness to her lip.

"Why, sir, sir," cried Atkins, again shaking the bridegroom; "you're to be married to-day, sir; and it's past the time. Have you forgot, sir?" "I know all about it," snorted Hodmadod; "scoundrel—disobeyed my orders—leave my service—world before you—all before you;" and with this, delivered very somnolently, Hodmadod rolled over upon his side, and would not awake. "I see how it is," thought Atkins. "He has turned the matter over in his mind; he has thought better of it, and this is his plan to get off the match." And Atkins had his own reasons for approving of his master's determination: Atkins would rather serve a bachelor, than a married man. Hence, when Candituft presented himself at the house—sent thither by a whisper from Mrs. Jericho to seek the bridegroom—Atkins declared that he knew nothing of his master; therefore, could say nothing. All he knew was, that Sir Arthur had intended to be married that morning; and if he was not at the church; if he was not married by that time, why that was his master's business; and not his, Atkins's. Moreover; perhaps Mr. Candituft and Sir Arthur had missed one another on the road. Now, Mr. Candituft was by no means urgent in his inquiries; he did not sift the testimony of the valet; in fact, asked for no particulars; but taking the suggestion of Atkins as the truth, assuming that the bridegroom and himself had crossed each other, the Man-Tamer returned to the vestry at the same leisurely rate at which he had set out upon his journey.

"Another five minutes, and 'twill be too late," cried Mizzlemist. Jericho said nothing; but rocked himself backwards and forwards in a chair, his hands in his pockets, and grinning to himself the most tremendous revenge. Mrs. Jericho sat frowning and tapping her foot; Monica looked blank and sympathetic, she could not but feel for the distress of the bride; Agatha wept without attempting to restrain her tears, whilst the Hon. Miss Candituft, calmly looking down upon the victim, held to the sobbing maid a bottle of salts. At this moment, the Hon. Mr. Candituft entered the vestry; he looked about him, as though expecting to see the bridegroom. "Why, he's not come!" said Candituft, surprised; "where can he be?" At this moment the church clock struck. "It is past the canonical hour," cried Mizzlemist, in tones heavy and sad as passing-bell. "Too late to marry to-day," said the clerk, "if the gentleman comes now." Mr. Jericho, without saying a word, rose. He approached the bride; and in the most peremptory manner offered his arm to the forlorn one. Agatha, wiping her tears, and drawing her veil about her scalded face, laid her trembling hand upon her father-in-law. Mr. Candituft, with words of sympathy, led away Mrs. Jericho, who would have despised herself to say a syllable then and there upon the shameful transaction. Monica followed with Mizzlemist, and as she declared, from the bottom of her heart pitying her poor sister; with a supplementary wish, accompanied by a spasmodic clutching of her little right hand, "that she was only a man to revenge dear Agatha." Miss Candituft was silent; but as she descended the church steps, her face glowed and her eyes sparkled with triumph.

CHAPTER XX.

As St. Shekel's clock struck twelve, the bridegroom awoke. Heavily yawning, he called for Atkins. The faithful creature, hovering about the door, immediately entered the room. "Atkins, what's o'clock ?" demanded Hodmadod.

Atkins, afraid to give a direct reply, said, "Clock, sir ? ha, sir ! don't you know ?"

"How the devil should I know ?" asked Hodmadod, still yawning, and then stretching himself, and rolling backwards and forwards, half stupified by sleep. "What's o'clock ?"

"Why, sir"—Atkins was afraid to speak—"why, sir, it 's past twelve o'clock."

"Past twelve, eh ? Past twelve," grumbled Hodmadod, very drowsily.

"Do you recollect, sir," and Atkins timidly approached the subject—"do you at all recollect, sir, anything you had to do this morning ?"

"Hm !" grunted Hodmadod, with half-closed eyes.

Hereupon Atkins took up the bridal waistcoat, and shaking it—quite as if he meant nothing—and smoothing it in the face of Hodmadod, repeated the question. The bridegroom's eyes gradually fixed themselves upon the snowy garment : light, and with it consciousness, gleamed within them. Suddenly, Hodmadod sat bolt upright in bed, and violently and rapidly exclaimed—"Atkins, tell me, Atkins ! Wasn't I to be married this morning ?"

"This looks a little like it, sir," said Atkins, at arm's length exhibiting the waistcoat.

Then Hodmadod, with a groan, fell back in his bed, and cried—"Atkins, Stubbs has poisoned me ; when I say poisoned me"—

"My dear fellow," exclaimed Candituft, bursting into the room ; "how delighted am I at last to find you ! What is the matter ? Poison ! Attempted suicide ? No doubt, to avoid this marriage. I always thought your heart was not in it. But wherefore poison ?"

"When I say poison, I mean—look there"—and Hodmadod pointed to the phial. "Stubbs prescribed it ; two doses, one at night, one in the morning. Thought it quite the same to take 'em both at once—they were only to strengthen my nerves, and they've"—

"I see; a narcotic. A double dose has been a tremendous sleeping-draught," said Candituft. "My dear friend—'tis a mercy you ever woke again. I have only just left the Jerichos."

"There's no time to lose," cried Hodmadod; "I feel dreadfully stupid with the physic; when I say stupid, I mean I'll be up, dressed, and ready for church directly."

"Too late, my dear boy," said Candituft with touching solemnity. "I came before to seek you—but your valet"—

"Acted according to orders, sir," said Atkins. "Sir Arthur knows that. He must clear me," and assured of this, Atkins, with the fullest self-satisfaction, left the room.

"Too late! How do you mean too late?" cried Hodmadod. "Never too late to marry."

"Too late to-day. We waited for you an hour; a full hour in the church," said Candituft.

"What a wretch I am!" exclaimed Hodmadod, striking the clothes with his fist; "when I say a wretch, I mean a brute not fit to see the light," and executing his own sentence, he rolled his head in the blankets. "Not fit to see the light," he howled through the bed-clothes.

"Come, you must be comforted," said Candituft. "Nevertheless, it was a dreadful sight in the vestry. Enough to melt a heart of stone." Hodmadod groaned. "Mr. Jericho all colours with rage. Mrs. Jericho still smiling, confident to the last." Hodmadod, with much emotion, shook his leg; and in smothered voice bellowed—"I don't deserve it." Candituft continued. "Monica all tears. My sister—dear girl!—only thoughtful of the happiness of others; regardless of her own sufferings—but I will not dwell upon that—my sister, I say, doing all she could to engage the attention of Agatha."

"And — and — Agatha?" asked the culprit through the blankets. There was no answer.—"Yes—my dear friend—tell me all her sufferings," cried Hodmadod in muffled voice—"all."

"Well, I must say this much in her praise," answered Candituft, "she bore the delay with the greatest patience." Gradually Hodmadod unrolled his head from the blankets. "She talked and chatted away the time in the prettiest and pleasantest manner."

"You don't say so?" cried Hodmadod, again showing his heated face to the light, and staring in the eyes of the cool and traitorous Candituft. "You don't say so?"

"It might have been to disguise her real feelings," said Candituft. "Nevertheless, I must say, it did not seem like it.

No; the fortitude seemed genuine. I know your partiality—you like women with such philosophy."

"No, I don't," cried Hodmadod savagely. "When I say I don't like 'em, I mean I hate 'em."

"It's my mistake, my dear friend. Well, where was I? Oh, well—we waited the hour; and when the clock struck we left the church," repeated Candituft.

"And Agatha?" moaned Hodmadod.

"Why, the little heroine skipped into her carriage, happy as a bird."—

"She's a flirt—a jilt"—cried Hodmadod. "I'm very much obliged to Doctor Stubbs."

"Do you really feel an obligation for that double dose?" asked Candituft.

"I do—I do!" shouted Hodmadod, and he shook Candituft's hand, and in despair again rolled himself up in the bed-clothes.

It was a very wicked rumour! A vile and cruel insinuation! And when we are made to feel the combined meanness and wickedness of such a slander; when we are oppressed by the power of such calumny; when our spirit faints beneath a sense of the poison, how apt we are to wish the world at once at an end, that truth may vindicate its lasting triumph. "Shut the book, my dear"—it was thus an old man spoke to his grandchild, reading a chronicle of atrocity; of blood, and fire, and infanticide, and the rest—"shut the book, my child, and let us pray for the Judgment."

Poor little Agatha! When she was assured by several bosom friends that it was well known throughout the world that Sir Arthur Hodmadod had taken poison—only, happily, a powerful constitution had triumphed over the deadly dose—poison for the sole, determined purpose of avoiding marriage with Miss Agatha Pennibacker, she wished at once to sink into her grave, to be well quit of a world that could coin and circulate such a wicked, wicked counterfeit. Nevertheless, Hodmadod did not show himself at Jericho House. What then? Good Doctor Stubbs gave daily intelligence of his amending health. Still, Hodmadod did not write! Why, no; Stubbs had forbidden him any mental exercise soever; his nerves were still in a jangle, and pen and ink were luxuries, in his delicate condition, not to be tasted. Agatha continued to be assured of the devotion, the unalterable passion of Sir Arthur. And she was willing to believe it. Nevertheless—her heart would whisper as much in her bosom—nevertheless, the smallest of notes would have been thankfully received from the dearest of lovers, and still not a line from Sir Arthur! Not a syllable to give hope of his speedy convalescence! Not even a hint of an early day to carry out the beautiful intention, so disastrously marred at the very foot of St. Shekel's altar. Well; a knowledge of the wicked truth oppresses us, and without further delay, we will at once make known the treachery of Candituft and the falsehood of the Baronet. As Agatha's heart is, for a time, doomed to be broken, the blow may as well come down at once. The earlier the damage, the sooner the repair.

"It is enough to make a man leave civilised life, and wear goatskins,"—said Candituft, on his next visit to Hodmadod—"to know and feel the malignity of the family of man."

"Certainly," said Hodmadod, "it's a family that will pick one another to pieces. When I say pick"—

"To be sure. Now, what do you imagine, my dear friend—what do you conceive to be the cause of your deferred marriage with the beautiful Agatha?"

"Why, the physic—the sleeping draught. Morphine, wasn't it?" asked the innocent Hodmadod.

"To be sure: but the world will not have it so. No—no. The world declares that you had thought better of the business"—

"Yes?" cried the Baronet, a little impatient.

"And between the bride and poison, chose the drug," and Candituft spoke as one disgusted.

"Impossible! It can't be!" exclaimed Hodmadod.

"My dear friend, I will not suffer myself to tell you how this falsehood is propped—buttressed up I may say—by other lies. I heard it avowed — malignantly avowed — that if you should, even now, marry Miss Pennibacker, the young lady will be indebted for a husband, not to his own choice, but entirely to a stomach-pump."

"But it isn't true, you know," said the Baronet.

"What matters truth to a scoffing world? I must, however, say that some—indeed a great many—excellent people were most kind, most sympathetic. They entirely believed in the innocence of your mistake: they kindly attributed your swallowing a double dose to the unreflecting fervour of a lover. But at the same time, they one and all declared, that in their opinion, the finger of fate was in it."

"When you say the finger of fate, you mean,—I was sent to sleep by the kindness of Providence?"

"Exactly so. In a word, it is evident"— say reflecting people —"it is evident that Sir Arthur was not to marry Miss Pennibacker."

And—to be brief—the people were right. For, in a few days, Sir Arthur wedded with Miss Candituft. And, when Agatha most needed the protection of a husband! For never had Mr. Jericho shown himself such a ruthless and intolerable tyrant. The servants began to declare he was mad, and such sad belief every hour gained ground with Jericho's family. Mrs. Jericho thought she would seek counsel of Basil; and then she feared to discover all her bodings to him. Again; it might be only another of the frantic fits that had of late shaken her helpmate; although this time the insanity took a more terrible development.

The Man of Money, though he had controlled his indignation, quitted St. Shekel's church an enraged and wounded individual. Yes; wounded in his delicate sense of money. Sir Arthur Hodmadod had shown to the world his contempt of the alliance—had proclaimed his indifference, his scorn of Solomon Jericho! The slight, the insult put upon the bride, was of little account—the blow was aimed at the father-in-law through the daughter. Already the Man of Money thought of pistols; and then, the risk of another hole through his monetary heart made him at once resolve upon peace. For two days Jericho considered with himself; brooded in silence over his new design. At length he was resolved. At length, he made the true discovery of the true value of wealth. The value was power — not show. Now this great and original discovery, as his disordered brain believed it, worked on him with the rage of madness. It was now his fond conviction that the money he bore about him, carried with it an immortal principle: if he ceased to exhaust his heart — his bank of life—he should live for ever. He would, therefore, not draw another note; no; not another. He would live upon what he had. He would turn the foolish superfluities about him into hard, tangible money. He would enjoy avarice; for avarice was power. The miser was the ragged king, and the finest of fools were his merest subjects. And with this thought, Jericho wandered throughout his house; now muttering, now talking, and now threatening the types and shows of wealth about him. He would no longer feed the eyes of the world—a perilous waste —but govern men with a golden sceptre. "Why, it was a vanity — a miserable vanity — the stupid pride of the peacock to spread before the world a splendid show! Now, the magpie was a wiser creature that concealed its treasures." And then he — the Man of Money — had had enough of public homage. He would therefore turn miser, and make men look upon his outside wretchedness with wonder; make them bow and simper to his very tatters. Again, mystery ever hung about the miser; for it was the serf-like weakness of the poor to multiply his riches.

"Mrs. Jericho," said the Man of Money. The trembling wife had been summoned to receive her husband's orders. She had scarcely power to meet the eyes of her helpmate. In two days, twenty years seemed to have gathered upon him. His face looked brown, thin, and withered as the last year's leaf. His whole body bent and swayed like a piece of paper, moved by the air. As he held his hand aloof, the light shone through it. Basil's words again sounded in the woman's ears: it was plain, there was some horrid compact between her lord and the infernal powers; or—it was all as one—the tyranny of conscience had worn him to his present condition.

"Mrs. Jericho, madam, you will instantly bring me all your diamonds—jewellery—all. Give the like orders to your daughters; the mincing harpies that eat me."

"My dear—my love!" cried the wife.

"My love! Well, well, you mean the same thing; but the words should not be 'my love'—but 'my money.'"

"You are not well, Solomon. You have been vexed by this disappointment; you have taken it too much to heart," stammered Mrs. Jericho.

"To heart! ha! ha! Very well—be it so. Heart and pocket, ma'am; all's one."

"My dear, let me send for Dr. Stubbs." The wife shrinkingly approached the Man of Money, and — timidly as a wood-nymph might put her hand upon a wolf—was about to encircle with her arm the neck of Jericho.

"Away with you! I'll have none of it. Woman's arms! The serpents that wind about a man's neck, killing his best resolutions. Away with you, and do as I command. Bring me all your treasures—all. And your minxes! See that they obey me too. And instantly."

"Yes, my love; to be sure," said Mrs. Jericho; for she was all but convinced that Solomon's reason was gone, or going. It was best and wisest for the time to be calm with him — to humour him. "And why, my love, do you wish for these things? Of course, you shall have them. But why?"

"To turn them into money, madam," cried Jericho, rubbing his hands. "We have had enough of the tom-foolery of wealth—I now begin to hunger for the substance. I'll do without fashion. I'll have power, madam; power."

"Yes, Solomon; certainly. But tell me, dearest, is not fashion power?" asked the wife, essaying a smile.

"The power of a fool. Am I a fool?" the wife raised her hands forbidding the thought. "What's all this show—all this outside trumpery? Do I enjoy it? Am I the master of it?"—

"Yes, love; of course," said Mrs. Jericho.

"I say no — no. The fools, the wretches who come about us —'tis theirs, as much as mine. To see it is to have it. Now why should I rob myself to feed the eyes of asses? No: I'll have all my money all to myself. I'll keep the power in my own hands — in my own hands. I'll raise an army, an army, madam;" and Jericho chuckled, and his wife was more convinced of his increasing insanity. "Now, woman, do you know what an army is?"

"Of course, my dear; I should hope so," and the wife still tried to coax the madman.

"I mean, the rich man's army; the miser's army, if you will. Now I propose to raise — let me see — let me see — a couple of million of fighting men."

"Mad! Past hope—mad!" thought the wife in despair.

"Do you hear me, woman?" roared the Man of Money, and he shook like a green flag in the wind.

"Yes, love; every word — every syllable. Of course;" and again the wife trembled.

"Two millions of fighting men. And how will I raise them? Why, there's your jewels; the jewels — for I'll have every stone of 'em—of those kittens, your daughters."—

("If I could only manage to send for Dr. Stubbs," thought Mrs. Jericho.)

"Then there's this house and all its lumbering trumpery. And —and—that cursed hermitage you made me buy for the time I was to be Prime Minister of England."—

("Oh that Doctor Stubbs would make a morning call!" silently prayed the wife.)

"I shall turn all—all into fighting men. And such men! Ha! ha! they are never killed; no—no; they multiply. Yes—yes" —and Jericho bent his head, and joined his hands, "they increase and multiply."

("He shall not be left alone," determined Mrs. Jericho, with a shiver.)

"And these millions of fighting men are men with the royal stamp upon 'em, Mrs. Jericho; men who sing a continual chorus *Dei gratia;* men, who it may be, kill — kill upon fields of parchment: kill dead, dead as the sheep that carried the skin,—what then? all's clean and clear, not a drop of blood."

"No. Oh, no; not a drop" — said Mrs. Jericho. Poor bewildered woman! What could she say?

"Now, when I make myself the general of these two millions of golden men, I send them out—some on one campaign—some on another. Some to do service for young heirs, and eat 'em afterwards. Well, they return to me. They come home, bringing prisoners; other golden captives. Every soldier his one, or two, or three soldiers. Eh?"

"Yes, love; of course," assented Mrs. Jericho.

"And therefore, madam," cried Jericho with ferocity—"therefore, we will have no more of this trumpery to waste upon others. No: I will have the power—the power in my own hands. I will have my fighting millions of good gold pieces; and — though we live in a hovel, and all of us wear sackcloth, as we all shall"—

"To be sure, my dear," said Mrs. Jericho, and she could not help it—she thought of a strait-waistcoat.

"Why, even then, when folks point at me, crawling about in outside beggary — even then the world shall acknowledge me to be greater than Cæsar, with all his legions."

"Yes—yes—dear," sighed Mrs. Jericho.

"Cæsar, with all his legions," repeated the man possessed: and he poised himself in his chair as upon a throne; and called into his shadowy face, as he believed, an imperial look of money.

CHAPTER XXI.

Leaving King Jericho anointed, crowned with wealth; wealth, the sceptre in his right hand; wealth, the ball of the world, in his left; we must bestow our thoughts upon a few of the subject people, who from time to time have appeared in these pages. We therefore speed our way to the frigate-built ship, *Halcyon*, Captain Goodbody, commander. One minute, reader, and arm-in-arm we stand upon the deck.

Some dozen folks with gay, dull, earnest, careless, hopeful, wearied looks, spy about the ship, their future abiding-place upon the deep for many a day. Some dozen, with different feelings, shown in different motions, enter cabins, dip below, emerge on deck, and weave their way among packages and casks, merchandise and food, lying in labyrinth about. The ship is in most seemly confusion. The landsman thinks it impossible she can be all taut upon the wave in a week. Her yards are all so up and down; and her rigging in such a tangle, such disorder; like a wench's locks after a mad game at romps. Nevertheless, Captain Goodbody's word is as true as oak. On the appointed day, the skies permitting, the frigate-built *Halcyon*, with her white wings spread, will drop down the Thames — down to the illimitable sea.

She carries a glorious freightage to the Antipodes; English hearts and English sinews. Hope and strength to conquer and control the waste, taming it to usefulness and beauty. She carries in her the seed of English cities; with English laws to crown them free. She carries with her the strong, deep, earnest music of the English tongue; a music soon to be universal as the winds of heaven. What should fancy do in a London Dock? All is so hard, material, positive. Yet there, amid the tangled ropes, fancy will behold—clustered like birds—poets and philosophers, history men and story men, annalists and legalists, English all, bound for the other side of the world, to rejoice it with their voices. Put fancy to the task, and fancy will detect Milton in the shrouds; and Shakspeare, looking sweetly, seriously down, pedestalled upon yon main-block. Spenser, like one of his own fairies, swings on a brace; and Bacon, as if in philosophic chair, sits soberly upon a yard. Poetic heads of every generation, from the half-cowled brow of Chaucer to the periwigged pate of Dryden, from bonneted Pope to nightcapped Cowper—fancy sees them all — all; aye, from the long-dead day of Edward to the living hour of Victoria; sees them all gathered aloft, and with fine ear lists the rustling of their bays.

Such passengers, however, are apt to steal their transit, paying no shilling to owners. We have therefore given sufficient — more than sufficient — paper and ink to their claims upon us. For here are passengers, crossing from the wharf to the deck; good folks journeyed from Primrose Place to inspect their sometime house upon the wave. Carraways and Basil have, on former visits, inspected every nook and corner of the *Halcyon*, and therefore tread the deck with an assured manner, as though they already felt themselves at home. And Bessy, with happy face, and sparkling eyes, looks vivaciously around, as though she was truly surprised by the excellent accommodations, the comforts and conveniences, manifest at a glance. Poor Mrs. Carraways tries to smile, but shudders at the dirt and confusion; and then, casting a hopeless look at the tangled ropes, fairly sighs in despair at the dreadful untidiness about her.

"A magnificent vessel, my dear," says Carraways. "Her first voyage, too."

"Very pretty, indeed, Gilbert," falters the wife.

"Beautiful, isn't she, mamma?" cries Bessy, exulting in the positive loveliness of the craft.

"A noble ship, madam," says Basil; "and everybody predicts as swift as a bird."

Mrs. Carraways glances aloft, then sideways; then sliding her hand under the arm of her husband, she asks a little tremulously, "Do you think, Gilbert, she is quite safe? The first voyage! Of course, somebody must go the first voyage. Still, do you feel confident she is safe?"

"Safe as the ark, my dear," answers Carraways, with a jocund laugh, squeezing his wife's arm at the same time.

"And how long" — Mrs. Carraways had already twenty times put the self-same query — "how long shall we be shut up in this ship? I mean, how long will the voyage"—

"Oh, Captain Goodbody will pledge his name and fame as a sailor," — cries Carraways — "not more than four months. Perhaps, a bare sixteen weeks. Why, what's the matter?"

"Nothing, dear; nothing," says the wife, with a blank face. "It's the — the smell of the tar — the pitch — it always made my heart sink; but—it's very strange—never so much as now."

"How very odd, mamma!" cries Bessy; "but you will think me a curious creature. Upon my word, I think the odour rather pleasant; indeed, positively agreeable," and the bride inhaled the pitched deck and tarred ropes as though she stood in a rose-garden. Bessy's valorous nostril made even her mother smile through her paleness; and Carraways with a laugh declared the girl ought to have been born a mermaid. Basil with proud and glowing looks, silently listened to the enthusiasm of his betrothed.

"I never did see a place in such a litter," said Mrs. Carraways, looking with the eye of housewife at the crowded, scattered deck. "And all those ropes, Gilbert; why, they never can get them out of tangle by the time they say."

"Never fear, lass; sailors can do anything. All they have to do with time is to beat it. But come, let us look over our house. As we are to be tenants for some weeks, you'll like to see the drawing-room and dining-room; the parlours, the kitchens, the garrets; and all the other conveniences of the dwelling. And let me tell you, it has one capital recommendation; it has no taxes. Basil, lad, show the way."

Basil, with Bessy under his arm, immediately proceeded to make the best of the way to the principal cabin. This, through a zig-zag path of various cargo, was at length accomplished; and the four stood in some dark place, in which one candle, with funereal wick, survived sullenly in the gloom.

"This," said Basil, very boldly, "is the state cabin."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Carraways.

"It's dark now, mamma," said the hopeful Bessy, "because the docks and the — the other ships are close at the windows; but when we are at sea, of course it will be beautiful. Such a view!"

"No doubt, Bessy," cried her father. "Here you'll sit and see the dolphins and the flying-fish, and the stormy petrels, and the —the—that is, all the other sea-sights."

"Very, very interesting indeed," sighed Mrs. Carraways.

"The place, it must be owned," said Basil, "is a little gloomy at present. In fact, cabins always are, in dock. But I assure you my dear madam, when once wide at sea, and from the windows here you look out and behold a wide, wide wilderness of water, blue or green, now intermingled with the red flood of morning, now crested with the white foam of noon, now deepened with the golden sunset—with star by star coming out, like angel eyes, to smile good night upon you — I do assure you, my dear mother, that then the place will show a very, very different aspect."

"Yes: I dare say," confessed Mrs. Carraways; and she felt she could confess no less.

"Oh, it will be beautiful," cried Bessy, and her hopeful, cordial voice sounded sweetly through the miserable, musty gloom. "Beautiful to sit here, and work, and read; and watch the changes of the sea; the albatrosses, and the coral reefs, and all the ocean wonders. Beautiful!"

"And now we'll go below," said Carraways; for he felt the contrast of the present and the future a little too glowing for his wife; whose only answer to the raptures of Bessy was a deeper sigh.

"Where are we going now?" asked Mrs. Carraways, as she suffered herself to be led in and out of what she called the shocking litter upon the deck. "Yes: I recollect — down stairs."

"A very noble ship, indeed; beautiful — very beautiful," said Carraways, pausing, and looking about him, in his way to the companion-ladder; for he felt that the dreadful moment, the fearful instant of trial was at hand; and therefore ventured to deliver himself of a triumphant flourish upon the magnificence of the floating prison in general, ere he introduced his wife to her dark, close berth; her condemned cell for many, many weeks.

"Many more stairs?" asked Mrs. Carraways, having taken about three in her descent.

"None; that is, none to speak of," answered her husband; still and still descending. "Here we are," he cried at length. "Fine and roomy between decks. Nothing can be more airy," said Carraways, taking off his hat.

"I feel as if I should faint," said Mrs. Carraways.

"Admirably ventilated," observed the husband.

"I had no idea it could be so nice," said Bessy, and she looked with as much hope, as much sweet cheerfulness about her, as though she stood in her own old, early summer bower; the playplace of her childish days.

"Here are the cabins," and Carraways opened a door, and showed in a sort of long box two opposite rows of boards.

"Cabins! My dear Carraways," cried the desponding wife; "why, they're like kitchen shelves, and not a bit broader. I couldn't sleep in one of them"—

"Oh yes, mamma," cried Bessy, "I'm sure they're much broader than they look." Still Mrs. Carraways considered that shelf whereupon for four months she was to be laid aside, with a troubled eye—a very rueful face. "And, after all, I've no doubt, mamma, with a little use they're much nicer than a bed." Carraways said nothing; but made up his mouth, as though contemplating the enjoyment of a whistle. "Very much nicer than a bed, especially at sea. And if the ship should ever go up and down — I say if it should — why, it's impossible to fall out with this ledge to the shelf. Nothing could be more considerate; nothing could be more comfortable." The face of Mrs. Carraways gradually relented at the cheerful voice of Bessy: by degrees, too, it took a somewhat comic look; there was, in truth, positive fun peeping through its sadness, and breaking up its shadow. And Bessy still continued eloquent upon the unintrusive advantages of a shelf—as Carraways avowed to himself not much broader than a boot-jack — over the ostentatious pretensions of any bedstead soever. "I'm sure, I shouldn't wonder, mamma, when you've become quite used to this, if you ever care to sleep upon a bedstead again."

Here Mrs. Carraways burst into a hearty laugh. The affectionate exaggeration of Bessy was not to be resisted; and her mother, with tears in her eyes and laughter at her lips, threw her arms about Bessy's neck, and doatingly kissed her. "Yes, my love; yes, my own Bessy; I will see everything with your own good, glad eyes. I ought to do so; and I will, love, from this moment." And, in very truth, it was delightful to see with what instant earnestness Mrs. Carraways set about the good work. She, who went below, moping and dim, and sad, returned to the deck with such smiling looks, that they fell like sunlight upon her husband and the lovers. The whole party looked as though they had come to secure berths for a voyage to Utopia or

Atlantis; with the further delight that there were kindred and friends gone thither long before, and anxiously expecting them. The party mounted the poop of the vessel, and Mrs. Carraways declared it would be a very beautiful place in fine weather to bring her knitting, and to work there and watch the birds and fishes. And the ship's deck, that, a while past, was in such a dreadful litter, was reconsidered with a very tolerant eye. Nay, we will not avouch that even the pitch and tar had not, within a few minutes, contracted a sweet and flowery odour—a whiff of lilac or violet—deemed impossible before. In a word, everything about the *Halcyon* was better than Hope—even were she a royal academician — could have painted it. And when Captain Goodbody, in the forepart of the ship, was pointed out to Mrs. Carraways; the said Captain at the time employed dancing up and down at arm's length an infant passenger of some eight or nine months' worldly experience; and dancing the little one, chuckling and crowing in concert with his playmate,—when, we say, Mrs. Carraways saw the commander of the *Halcyon* so genially employed, — she emphatically avowed that then she had not another care about the voyage on her mind; and if the luggage had only been aboard, and the ship cleared of its litter, she would have been quite ready for sea that very minute.

"That's a good lass," said Carraways. "Still, not this minute. Here's a pair of doves to be coupled, before we take ship in the ark;" and Bessy blushed.

"Why, of course, Gilbert," replied his wife. "I meant that and all;" and Bessy blushed still deeper.

At this moment, a gentleman, his wife, and—Mrs. Carraways counted them as they came up the poop ladder—a family of nine children ascended in procession. The gentleman approached Carraways with a ceremonious elevation of beaver: then, with measured syllables, began,—"I believe, sir, I have the pleasure of addressing a brother passenger that will be?" Carraways bowed. "My name, sir, is Dodo: a name, I believe, pretty well known in that place they call the world, down there," and Dodo, as with accusing finger pointed towards the west, and bitterness seemed to well to his lips. Basil stared at the change wrought in the man. His face, once shrewd, earnest, yet withal honest and good-tempered, seemed edgy, as sharpened on the world's grindstone. His thin hair was white as paper; and when he spoke, it was with a twitch, as though every syllable he uttered stung his lips with a sense of wrong. Basil at once recognised Dodo, although Dodo had no remembrance of Basil.

"I trust, sir," continued Dodo, "I may take the freedom of a self-introduction, as I am to have the care of you during the voyage. I go out as doctor of the vessel. And my best wishes are that none of you will have any need of me." Carraways bowed in thankfulness of such benevolence. "I go out, understand me," said Dodo; and then he smiled scornfully—"but never, never to return. I will not take a particle of the dust of England with me. Not a particle. When I finally step aboard, it shall be in a pair of new shoes; bran-new shoes. Not a particle of that ungrateful earth," and Dodo pointed to the west.

"I am sorry, sir," said Carraways, "you should have such cause for new shoe-leather."

"It is no matter, sir; no matter," and Dodo raised his hands, and shook his fingers, as though shaking all annoyance from them. "No matter. We go to a fine country, sir; a virgin country, sir. A country, fresh from the hand of nature; a country, glorious and flourishing with living wood; a country yet unburdened, sir, with heavy sins of brick and mortar. A magnificent country. So fertile! A crop with every quarter; splendid pasturage; wonderful cattle; beautiful flowers, and birds, and fishes"—

"And"—said Mrs. Carraways—"and no snakes."

At the sentence, Doctor Dodo fairly leapt from his feet. "That's it, my dear madam—that's it, my truthful lady! No snakes—no reptiles—no vipers; that's it," and Dodo rubbed his hands, and chuckled with a wildness of enjoyment somewhat akin to ferocity. Mr. Carraways remembered the reports of Dodo's insanity; and began to wonder at, perhaps to regret, his appointment as doctor of the *Halcyon*. "Excuse me, sir," said Dodo; "but it's a subject I must feel deeply. Allow me to introduce Mrs. Dodo; our children, with one at the breast at home. Well, sir; here we are, twelve of us, stung out of the country by vipers; bitten out of house and home by adders. Am I wrong then, when I thank heaven that where we're bound to, there are no snakes?"

"Indeed, Doctor Dodo," said Carraways, "your numerous family adds an interest to your story. What do you mean? Bitten, stung! I don't understand you."

"By the snakes that walk, sir. The snakes that still have speech, plainly as the first snake that ever wagged his three-forked lie, sir. The vipers that kill a man's reputation; the snakes that trail their slime over his daily bread."

"My dear George," said Mrs. Dodo, soothingly.

"Be quiet, Charlotte. Stung as I have been, when I can get a gentleman to hear me—for that's a comfort not always granted

—when I can get a gentleman with a heart in his face to listen to me, it does my soul good to tell my wrongs—to tell my wrongs;" and the poor man trembled, and grew very pale. Then, putting down his emotion with a strong will, he proceeded, as he believed calmly, to narrate his injuries. And thus he now muttered, and now gasped them—"You see, sir, there is a fellow in this town, named Jericho,"—Carraways was about to stop Dodo, but Basil by a look, forbade him,—"a sort of man-devil, sir; man-devil. A fiend with bowels made at the Bank, and just smeared with a paste of flesh to seem human. Well, this demon was shot through the heart. I saw it, sir. I looked through the perforation; could have run my cane through the hole; a hole as clean as a hole in a quoit; and the devil walked away alive, and is alive yet; though shredding away, sir; shredding like scraped horse-radish. Well, sir, not to fatigue you, I proclaimed what I had seen. I arose before the world; and—I never denied the truth in my life, never when I was a bachelor, and shall I do it now, with ten children to blush for me?—and I denounced this Jericho to be the devil that I know he is. I made oath that I had seen the sunlight through what ought to have been the left ventricle or the demon's heart; and what, sir; what was my reward—what my return by the world? Why the world called me a lunatic, mad-man! My patients fell from me in a day. A few hours, and my hand was unblessed with a single guinea. The devil Jericho threw gifts about him; and all society turned itself into a knot of vipers, and stung my reputation—killed my practice—poisoned my bread. And so, sir"—and Dodo gasped for breath, and strove for serenity,—"and so, I have resolved to leave the land. We all go,"—and Dodo smiled—"all, mother and myself, the nine here, and the one at the breast. I've brought 'em—dear hearts!—to show 'em their berths. I'm afraid, I've tired you; good morning, sir. Come along, Charlotte; come along, my loves. We go where there are no snakes—no snakes." And poor Doctor Dodo, with his meek and melancholy wife, descended to the deck; and thence, followed by the nine children, dived to the sleeping shelves below.

"Poor dear man!" said Mrs. Carraways; and then she added—"but I'm so glad he's going with us. If one is never ill, still Gilbert, it always gives one confidence to have a doctor of the party."

"To be sure, my love," answered Gilbert. "A doctor may be an excellent warranty of health. For the very reason that he's at hand, we may resolve to do without him, eh?" And Carraways looked waggishly in his wife's face; and seemed to take a new stock of good spirits from the happiness he saw there.

Indeed, all the four were in the blithest mood. And we may say of Bessy, wherever she looked she seemed to carry light and pleasure with the glance.

They were about to descend, when from the dark state-cabin came a long gurgling laugh that made them all pause. "I'm sure I know that laugh," cried Mrs. Carraways.

"Oh! I'm certain it's she," avowed Bessy, gravely confident. "It must be"—and it was—Jenny Topps. She ran out like a kitten after her tail upon the deck, and then looking up, caught the faces of her friends. Whereupon, Jenny bobbed a deep curtsey, blushed, and immediately put her arm under the protecting arm of Topps as he lounged out from the cabin. Instantly, Topps himself was as much confused as his wife; which confusion he signified, by taking off his hat, and without a word smoothing down his hair.

"Why, Robert, what brings you here?" asked Carraways. descending the ladder.

"Why, sir—please, sir," answered Robert, "come to see the ship, sir;" and Robert looked at Jenny.—"That's all, sir; nothing more, sir."

"Now, Robert, you know I hate dogmatism"—Robert bowed —"nevertheless, I must know what brings you here. Come, tell me; what is it?"

Still Robert smoothed his hair; still he answered—"Come to see the ship, sir. Nothing more, sir."

"Indeed," said Carraways. "Well, then, Robert; let's go and look a little for'ard. I hav'n't seen the caboose yet, myself. Come, Basil." And the wary man moved onward with the two, leaving Jenny Topps in charge of Mrs. Carraways and Bessy. Scarcely had the three men proceeded beyond the main-mast, when the three women had plunged into the subject that, as Carraways knew, he alone should fail to fathom.

"Well, then, dear ma'am, if you'll not tell Robert that I told you," said Jenny, burning to speak, "we've made up our minds to go wherever you go; and we've come to take our places."

"My dear Jenny," said Mrs. Carraways, touched by the affectionate fidelity of the young couple, "my good girl, I hope you have well considered this step? It would make us all very unhappy, should you for a moment repent it. To leave your friends"—

"But we've none to leave; for father goes with us," cried Jenny, pouring out her news. "And you can't believe how happy the old man is at the thought of it! He says it will be so beautiful for him in his old age to carry reading and writing to the children in the wilderness. For he declares he will have a school there, if all his scholars learn under the naked sky, and sit upon stumps of trees. You can't think how happy he is. And then, ma'am "—added Jenny with graver looks—" I'm sure it will be the saving of Robert. It will, indeed, ma'am. That cab-work, ma'am," and Jenny raised her hands, " is dreadful."

"It must be," said Mrs. Carraways. " Out all weathers."

"It isn't so much the weather, as the company. It 'ud spoil an angel to be a cabman," averred Jenny—" waiting for the people, he has to wait for, so late at clubs. But, pray, ma'am, don't tell master, ma'am ; for Robert's set his heart upon surprising him when he finds him in the ship. And it will make Robert so happy to wait upon master all the passage ; and me to wait upon you—and I'm never ill, never. Been up and down to Blackwall a dozen times, and felt it no more than if I'd been in my own room. And so, I'm sure, I can be of some use to you."

"My good, good girl," cried Bessy, giving both her hands to the excellent creature.

"And above all," said Jenny, very seriously, "there is one thing in this passage that will be a great load off my mind. It is this. The passage, they say, lasts four months. Now in that time, I shall be certain sure to finish my patchwork quilt."

Here Carraways and Basil returned, Topps following apart. Mrs. Topps, dropping a hasty curtsey, made off to her husband, and Carraways regarding his wife and daughter, with laughing, curious looks,—with Basil conducted them from the ship. The guilty Mrs. Topps, hanging on her husband's arm, had an instant dread that her lord would question her upon the suspected subject of conversation with the ladies. Whereupon with fine instinct, she resolved to be beforehand in the way of interrogation.—" Robert, my dear," said Jenny, with the deferential air of a scholar ; " Robert, what did Mr. Carraways mean when he said he hated dog—dogmatism ? " Topps was puzzled. " Robert, my dear," Jenny urged, " what—what in the world is dogmatism ? "

Now it was the weakness of Topps never to confess ignorance of anything soever to his wife. " A man should never do it," Topps has been known in convivial seasons to declare ; " it makes 'em conceited." Whereupon Topps, wrested from his first purpose of examination, by the query of his spouse, prepared himself, as was his wont, to make solemn, satisfying answer. Taking off his hat, and smoothing the wrinkles of his brow, Topps said—" Hm ! what is dogmatism ? Why, it is this—of course. Dogmatism is puppyism come to its full growth."

CHAPTER XXII.

And Jericho lived in his large house, like a rat in a hole. Avarice had seized upon him; and with every hour bent and subdued every thought and purpose to coin all his possessions. He would have his millions of fighting pieces. Hence, he loathed to look upon the finery about him. It was a wicked, a wasteful folly. A shameful sacrifice to the eyes of others. He had discharged all his servants—had no one, save one old man; the pauper grandfather of one of his footmen, who had haunted the house for offal; and, as Jericho believed, was in lucky hour discovered by his master to become the most faithful of retainers. This old man seemed of congenial wickedness with Jericho. Indeed, there looked between them a strange similitude; twin brethren damned to the like sordidness, the like rapacity; with this difference, that the master could enjoy to his soul's triumph the lust of wealth; whilst the more wretched serf was ravenous with the will alone. It was very odd. Jericho and old Plutus—the Man of Money was a grim wag; and in his savage drollery had nicknamed the crust-hunting pauper Plutus—Jericho and Plutus were in face and expression alike as two snakes; alike in key their voices, as viper's hiss to hiss: though Plutus, be it known, was the fatter and the louder reptile.

The Man of Money sat in one of his garrets; a den of a place, though crowning the magnificent fabric of Jericho House. The scullion had slept there. And there remained the very bed, the very table, the one chair enjoyed by the discarded drudge. It was the worst, the meanest nook of the house; and therefore, Jericho rejoicing, took possession of its squalor. It was with one effort, a triumph over a lingering weakness for the nice, the soft appliances of life. He sat there, in that low, slant garret, the sovereign of himself; the conqueror of the spendthrift, the reveller, and the glutton. The wretchedness that surrounded him was the best, the seemliest pomp to declare and grace his victory.

" 'Tis a pity, Plutus—a pity, you wretch—that all the vultures cannot alight in one day; a great pity: for I'll not quit here, till all's sold and the money bagged. A great pity. And they can't all come to-morrow? But I'll not leave the carcase. No. I'll stop till all's gone—all's gone." And Jericho swathed his gown, ostentatiously tattered, about his withering body; and rubbed together his transparent hands.

"Good master," said the old slave, with a slavish cringe, "good master, if the dealers could come all in one day, would it be wise to have them in a crowd—all in a crowd?"

"Yes, wise; very wise. That they might maul and bid over one another. Nevertheless, be it as you say. But they'll all come?"

"All; good, kind sir," answered Plutus. "There's Israel, and Ichabod, and Laban, and Seth, and Shem, and Issachar"—

"Peace, you old dog," cried Jericho; and the menial bowed and smiled at the abuse—"you needn't bark all their names. It is enough, if they will all come—all come. And when I have melted all that's here—for every bit shall to the crucible—why then there's that accursed hermitage—that home of vanity that my wife made me buy. Me, poor fool! then as fine and brainless as a horse-fly. Where is"—and Jericho's leaf-like body shook, and his eye glowed like a carbuncle as he dragged the words out—"where is that woman? Where, those young white-faced witches that would have me melt like wax before the fires of perdition; would utterly consume me, so they might live and rejoice, and array themselves in my destruction? What! They defy me in my own house? That woman, the mother witch, that years long-past ensnared me with a lie; that lured me to the church with what seemed gold. A damned jack-a-lanthorn! And there she stood; her hand in mine, and a lie in her heart. I see her now. Her large beautiful face—for it was beautiful—with a smile all over it; and that smile all a lie. Hm!"—said Jericho moodily, "I was a happy, careless jackass, till I thrust my neck under a yoke, running for what seemed golden oats—golden oats."

"Be of good heart, master," said old Plutus with a mischievous leer, "'tis a common case. The best of men have fallen in the snare; the best of women, too. Wasn't mistress herself a little choused—just a little?"

"What of that? When two beggars marry, still the she-beggar has the best of it: for the he-pauper—poor, damned devil—has tatters to find for two. And this woman now defies me. And her young tiger kittens! Well, well, we shall see—we shall see," cried Jericho; and again he rubbed his hands, warming them as with some horrid resolution. "They dare me in my own house. They will not stir, they cry. They will not—mother wolf, and young ones—they will not let go their hold. Well, I'll sell them bare—bare. Their beds from under them; their clothes from off them. I will turn that woman—that lie—ha! 'tis a harder and a sharper lie than it was; older and baser looking, than when first it cheated me—I'll turn her upon the world, without a shred, without a doit."

"You can't do it," said the grimy serving-man, with a hard grin, "can't do it, indeed, dear master. The law makes a man provide for his wife. Such is the world. More's the pity!"

"Law! What's the law to a man with millions of mercenaries? With fighting yellow-boys, fighting where still they've won—are still to win—the bloodiest of battles; though no blood is seen? In law's very courts? In the very courts?" And then Jericho, with his brow in his hand, sat for some minutes, silently brooding; his filthy attendant looking steadily at him; and, it seemed strange—growing more and more like his horrid master. At length the Man of Money started from his meditation. "Why, what a brain is mine!" he cried: "sometimes I feel it fluttering in my skull—fluttering like a bird; and sometimes humming and buzzing like a beetle."

"It may be want of rest," said the pliant Plutus.

"Liar!" roared Jericho: "but that's no matter. Go; get me a crowbar. Stop. This will do," and Jericho took the poker—the foreign luxury had been brought to the scullion's bower by the serving-man—and balancing it, he repeated mutteringly: "This will do. Now, follow me down stairs. This will right me. This will punish the lie—the fine lie—the lie that first betrayed me."

"Dear, good sir," cried Plutus, with hypocritic whine, "you'll do no violence, you won't harm the dear ladies? Consider, dear, good master; consider your own safety. If you consider nobody else—and why, indeed, should you?—at least, consider your sweet self. Dear, dear master! Have mercy on your own days, and don't hurt the ladies."

"I'll have my right—I'll have my own. I'll have what my blood, and flesh, and marrow are turned into. I'll have it all back. You dog, follow me."

"As in duty bound, dear master," said the old slave; and with a smile and a light step, he followed Jericho who, as he descended the stairs, muttered revenge against the lie—the chain of lies—that, as he said, had bound him.

Poor Mrs. Jericho—more and more assured of the madness of her husband—had resolved to take counsel of her dear and valued friends. Again and again she had determined to seek Basil, and then she faltered; for she feared the wild enthusiasm of his temper. He would, it was her dread, make such strange conditions; would doubtless insist upon her renunciation of Jericho's wealth; would require herself and daughters to forego the luxuries that custom had made necessary as daily bread.

Therefore she would appeal to the judgment of wise, practical people; of men who really knew the world; of folks who, strong in the religion that it was the best possible abiding-place, never dreamt of quitting it. (Thus, whilst Jericho was raving in the garret, Mrs. Jericho was giving audience to councillors and friends. The Man of Money saw his wife and her daughters homeless, destitute, and enjoyed happiness, as at a draught, meditating such misery. And at the same moment, Mrs. Jericho contemplated the Man of Money secure in a mad-house; made harmless and made as comfortable as his sad condition would allow. Jericho, his brain the while singing with sweet music, was reviewing his millions of golden soldiery. And at the like instant, Jericho's wife, anticipating time, beheld her lunatic lord in paper diadem and straw boots.)

Doctor Stubbs, combining the two noble characters of doctor and friend, was prompt—ay, affectionately prompt—with his best aid. And Doctor Mizzlemist united great private regard with great public erudition. Mizzlemist had flown in his carriage with his best consolation. Colonel Bones, in his hard, coarse way—but solacing withal, like sugar from wood—came ready with his counsel, though at the peril of his life. Commissioner Thrush, filled with exotic wisdom culled from the spiceries of Siam, attended, a comforter; and the Honourable Cesar Candituft, though bleeding with an inward wound for the falsehood of a friend, even Candituft at such a moment would not absent himself.—No; though Agatha had been betrayed, treacherously supplanted by his own sister, it was still his duty to suppress his feelings, and watch the interests of Monica; the more especially that destiny might haply interknit them with his own.

And, at the very time that Jericho bethought him of a crowbar as the instrument of some tremendous deed, at the very time, these councillors, with Mrs. Jericho, Monica, and Agatha Pennibacker sat in the drawing-room; sat solemn in druidic circle. Indeed, the extreme caution—manifest in the looks and manner of all, gave a strange air of mystery to the gathering. Mrs. Jericho, though reduced to a single maid—who would not be turned out, though Jericho abused and threatened never so lustily—had resolved not to quit the premises. No: she had made up her mind; and if it must be, she would die in that drawing-room. Therefore, as her councillors one by one arrived, they were, to their own astonishment and passing disquiet, hushingly admitted across the threshold, and stealthily conducted to the presence-chamber. "Gently, sir,"—said Wyse, the maid, as she admitted Candituft, the last comer, "gently, if you please: tread like a cat; for if the madman should hear you, I wouldn't answer for your life." Warned by such intelligence, Candituft —after an unconscious backward glance at the street door —stept, like any dancing-girl, upon his toes to the drawing-room.

"My dear friends," said Mrs. Jericho, "in the great calamity that has fallen upon our house—upon our house—it is at least a consolation that I can cast myself upon your sympathies."

"To be sure, certainly," said Mizzlemist. "These are the times that try friends."

"For myself, I could endure my fate without a murmur. I could follow poor Mr. Jericho—I could follow him to the end of the world."

"You mus'n't think of it, my dear madam," said Doctor Stubbs. And then not content with a single declaration, he iterated with professional emphasis—"You must *not* think of it."

"But I have daughters," said Mrs. Jericho; and for a time she evidently felt she had said sufficient. For, she let her right arm fall, as with a weight of emotion; and statue-like, looked icily before her.

"It is of course your duty, madam, to take care of yourself," said Commissioner Thrush. "Happily, we live in a christian country; where we look upon woman—lovely woman—as something divine."

"An angel in the rough. Hm?" said Bones.

"We can all see, my dear lady," said Candituft, "that the wife wrestles with the parent. But after all, what would this world be without its trials? They do us good; they are meant to do us good."

(Poor little Agatha! She sighed, and bit her lip; totally rejecting this side-wind consolation.)

"And therefore, my dear friends"—said Mrs. Jericho with new nerve—"counsel me; advise me. Upon your knowledge of the world I rely. It will be a hard struggle; but Mr. Jericho's property must be protected; and therefore, I fear Mr. Jericho —as I say, it will cost me many a pang—Mr. Jericho must be restrained."

"Make yourself comfortable, madam," said the voice of consolation, speaking through Stubbs; "there is nothing more easy; nothing more easy."

"It's done every day," cried Mizzlemist, as though he spoke of eating a meal or taking a pinch of snuff.

"The calamity is common," said Candituft, with his mind made up at the very worst to endure it.

"And, in this country," remarked Thrush, much comforted with the thought, "lunatics are so well considered."

"Happy as kings. Hm ?" cried Bones.

"Still I have hope," said Mrs. Jericho. "I have consolation in the belief that the poor dear creature—ha, what a heart he has under all his strange manner !—only wanders for a time. And the truth is, my dear friends, it must be confessed he has been sorely tried." The friends stared. "It is no wonder that the strongest brain should reel a little under so sudden a blow." The friends stared anew. "To be singled out by fortune ; to be selected from millions to suffer what he has done ! To be called upon, at a moment I may say, to stand with such a mountain on his head ! To be made, at a minute's notice, if I may use the expression, another Atlas ; why, it's enough to make a giant stagger."

"Why, what—what trial ?" asked Doctor Stubbs with pompous concern.

"What blow ?" inquired Mizzlemist, looking sagely adown his waistcoat.

"Singled out ! How,—what for ? Singled out ?" growled Bones.

"A mountain on his head ! What's the mountain about ?" asked Thrush.

"Excellent, worthy creature ! An Atlas in calamity ! And none of us to know it," cried Candituft.—"My dear madam what is it—what has Mr. Jericho had to suffer ?"

"Why, riches"—answered Mrs. Jericho, a little surprised at the dulness of her councillors.

"Oh !" exclaimed the friends, feeling at once sympathetic and rebuked.

"The sudden load of wealth was enough to crush any brain : and though—dear Solomon !—for a time stood up like a hero beneath the shock ; still, I do fear, it has been too much for that fine web of reason as, Doctor Stubbs, I think I've heard you call the brain ?"—

"Never, madam," cried Stubbs hastily ; "could not possibly have done it. For the brain is not a web, but a series of convolutions, divided into two hemispheres, that"—

"To be sure ; that is exactly what you said," rejoined Mrs. Jericho. "Well, then, I'm afraid of the hemispheres."

"In a word, and to come at once to business," said Mizzlemist, who for some time had shifted in his chair, as though he had sat on lumps of pounce—"in a word, madam, it is your opinion that your husband—our unfortunate friend—is at the present time incapable of controlling his own affairs ?"

Mrs. Jericho, placing her handkerchief before her face, said, "That is my opinion."

"Very good," rejoined Mizzlemist, satisfied that matters were at length shaping themselves into form. "Very good. However, let us proceed with certainty. Let us hear the evidence. For I need not observe, it would be very painful to poor Jericho's family—very painful to his friends—to sue out a commission of lunacy, and after all not to succeed. Waiving my friendship, failure would hurt my feelings as a professional man." Saying this, Mizzlemist drew himself up to a table, whereupon were those dangerous implements—paper, pen, and ink. Then with pen in hand, put the opening question—"What was the first wild symptom, my dear madam? Yes; as you conceive, the first indication of Mr. Jericho's insanity?"

"The first? Oh! It was this," answered the troubled wife and witness. "This. He said, that as he felt himself a goose in the House of Commons—goose, I remember was the word—he would go to stubble in September, and never return to Parliament again."

"Hm!" said Mizzlemist; and a little baulked, he rubbed his nose, and looked down upon the virgin sheet. Then, as though taking heart, he said—"But we'll proceed, if you please. The next?"

"The next symptom? It was when—when—you will recollect, Mr. Candituft, the circumstance—when we spoke of Monica's dowry, and—and"—

"Perfectly well," said Candituft, "and in the wildest manner, he refused a single penny."

"Well?" said Mizzlemist, still twiddling the impending pen. "That doesn't help us. What next?"

"Why, then," deposed Mrs. Jericho with amended alacrity, "the poor fellow raved and stormed, and said the house was furnished with money that was his blood." And still Mizzlemist wrote not a syllable. "His blood," repeated Mrs. Jericho, with pathetic emphasis.

"Hm!" cried Mizzlemist, "we get no nearer to it. No nearer. But let's proceed."

"And then I perfectly recollect"—chimed in Candituft—"that our unfortunate friend, foaming while he said it—foaming, my dear Doctor Mizzlemist—declared that he was being eaten alive by society. That, in other words, people of the best condition who came to his parties, were no better than cannibals."

Doctor Mizzlemist laid down the pen, and with a blank stare thrust both his hands in his pockets. "I must confess," he said at length, "we are all in the dark as yet. I don't see a ray of light; not a glimmer."

"Why, surely, all this must be madness? Plain as the moon at the full?" said Candituft.

"The fact is," answered Mizzlemist, "as Mr. Jericho's friends, we may have our own convictions. We may not doubt his insanity. But, unfortunately, we have to convince a jury."

"Ha! that's it," said Monica with a sigh; and Agatha shook her little head and sighed, "that's it."

Colonel Bones had, for some time, been in thought. At length he observed—"Could nothing be made out of the poor fellow's conduct the day when—when Miss Agatha—was *not* married?"

"Oh, Colonel!" exclaimed Agatha with a spasm of sorrow.

"Beg your pardon," said Bones. "Better luck next time. But I was only thinking,—was there no bit of madness then? Laughed very wildly, didn't he?"

"Won't do for a jury," cried Mizzlemist. Then, with great zeal, he resumed the pen. "Come, we must not be beat in this way. Can't you help us, doctor?" and Mizzlemist appealed to Stubbs.

"By-and-by; in good time," said Stubbs. "Keep me to the last. I prefer it."

Mizzlemist looked eloquently at Mrs. Jericho. "With submission, doctor," said the lady, hesitatingly and mournfully, "I think the state in which you find us, is sufficient evidence of the calamity that afflicts our house. All the servants discharged. Mr. Jericho himself, attended by some hideous creature—who he is, and whence he came I know not—Mr. Jericho, shut up in a garret, like some wild beast in a cave—Mr. Jericho, I say"—

"Very true; and bad as true," said Mizzlemist, "but still," he added with a sigh, "no evidence."

"Why, what is wanted?" cried Monica, out of all patience with the stupidity of law.—"Are we to wait until we are all killed—now, mamma, I must speak—are we to wait until we are all made dreadful victims, until the law will protect us?"

"Very good, indeed; very well said," observed Mizzlemist, pleased with the spirit of the maiden; whilst Candituft a little gravely gazed upon the flushed cheeks and flashing eyes of his betrothed. "Perhaps, my dear young lady, you can assist us, after all?" said Mizzlemist. "Your mamma will, I know, permit you to depose to whatever you know. Now; have you witnessed any symptoms of insanity on the part of Mr. Jericho?"

"Thousands," exclaimed the impassioned and imaginative Monica.

"Name one; one to begin with," said the Doctor, "that will prove to a jury your worthy father-in-law to be wholly incapable of controlling his own affairs. One instance."

"Well, then," said Monica, entering with rapture on the task, and for one instance ready to run over twenty, touching them like keys of music—"well, then, he's discharged all the servants—he's locked up all the plate—he's asked for our jewels back again—he's going to sell the house, and turn us into apartments—he's threatened the three of us with gowns of sackcloth—and—and—and—he called me on Monday last—and at the very time I was singing too—he called me a screeching wild puss of the woods!"

"Did he, indeed?" said Mizzlemist.

"It was worse than puss," cried Monica, hysterical.

"Nevertheless," and Mizzlemist dropt the pen, "there is no evidence in all this; no evidence that Solomon Jericho, Esq., M.P., is of unsound mind, and incapable of managing his own affairs."

As Doctor Mizzlemist delivered this opinion, a crash was heard in an adjoining room. Another and another—and then a loud, triumphant laugh from the throat of Jericho.

Wife and daughters, with jury of friends, started to their feet. Candituft, ere he was aware—for had he reflected a moment, he would as soon have unbarred a lion's cage—opened the door. And there stoood Jericho, laden with spoil! The girls shrieked when they beheld their jewel cases in the gripe of the Man of Money; and Mrs. Jericho, when she saw all her diamonds repossessed by their donor, felt as a mother must feel, beholding her cherished little one—her only treasure—crunched between the teeth of a royal tiger. Jericho said not a word; but stood, and leered upon the company, and with a savage chuckle, the while shaking the iron implement—the burglarious poker with which he had broken up cases and cabinets—rejoicingly exhibited his plunder. Then, about to ascend to his garret, he roared to the felonious familiar that grinned at his elbow—"See all these robbers into the street—the street; and then come to me;" and still hugging the spoil, Jericho, with another laugh, flitted up the staircase.

"Surely, Dr. Mizzlemist," cried the impulsive Agatha, "this must satisfy anybody? This is madness—to steal my pearls!"

"My amethysts!" sobbed Monica.

"And my diamonds!" cried Mrs. Jericho, with so deep an utterance of wrong, that every other injury was lost in it—straws in a whirlpool.

Doctor Mizzlemist shook his head. "Very violent; very selfish; nevertheless, the fact would by no means satisfy a jury that Solomon Jericho is incapable of looking after his own property."

And the sheet of paper provided to contain a crowd of evidence against the sanity of Jericho, remained without a mark; a virgin page. Its whiteness went to the very heart of Mrs. Jericho, as her listless eye fell upon it. Life itself seemed a blank.

CHAPTER XXIII.

To-morrow morning, the church of St. Asphodel—Bessy from her window in Primrose Place, could see its spire tapering above the distant trees—would hold within its walls a happy couple. To-morrow, Basil and Bessy were to be writ in the church-books one. It would be a magnificent wedding; hopes and affections would so adorn and elevate the ceremony. But, when the time arrives, we will endeavour as faithfully as we may, to chronicle the doings of the hour. As the day before a wedding will to some parties seem the longest day that ever dawned and died, so to others it will appear the shortest day imaginable; a day that just shows itself and is gone. However Basil and Bessy may have measured the day of which we write, thinking it a day without an end, sure we are that Mrs. Carraways more and more believed it impossible that the wedding could take place on the morrow, so much had still to be completed.

"However I shall get through what I have to do, I can't tell," said the good woman to her incredulous husband. "I only hope, we shan't have to put it off." Carraways laughed. "Yes, my dear, it's all very well. You men think that things can do themselves; but Bessy can't go if her luggage isn't packed."

"Why not? I suppose she doesn't want to take her trunk to church," said the aggravating Carraways, and again he laughed with such a want of consideration! And here, Miss Barnes came full of meaning into the room; and suddenly paused, seeing Carraways. It was of no use; Mrs. Carraways would at once assert her authority. Therefore she set herself face to face with her husband.

"Now, my dear Gilbert; you must go out; you must indeed. And, there's a dear, don't let me see you again until the evening." Miss Barnes, of course, said nothing:

but her looks eloquently and stedfastly seconded the wishes of the matron.

"What! I'm in the way? Well, Bessy and I are going upon a little business."

"Bessy," cried her mother, rather astonished; and then she complacently added—"to be sure; why not? We can do everything better without her, can't we, Miss Barnes? And poor thing, she's as pale,—for she hasn't been out these three days. So, you'd better go; both of you."

In a very short time, considering that Bessy had only to put on her bonnet, the bride and her father had left the house; surrendered the field to Mrs. Carraways and Miss Barnes made happy by their employment. And leaving them deep in trunks, let us accompany father and daughter.

Bessy had resolved upon carrying with her to her new country, a very swarm of illustrious strangers: constant, untiring labourers that should fill the air with sweetest music—music that should murmur of her English home—still winning from the fields the most delicious gains. It appeared that this order of labourers—wonderful workers; at once singers, chemists and masons,—we mean, in a word, the honey-bee—had not yet travelled to the Antipodes.* Honey-bee had yet to cross the ocean to a new world. Though his great progenitors—the Adam and Eve bees—had sung and worked in the roses of Eden—none of their million million descendants, to the time of a certain lady—and let the name of the benefactress shine like a star in future Antipodean history—had touched upon the other side of the Pacific. The flowers and blossoms of ages had budded and fallen, and not a bee had drunk of their honey-cups.—This, become known to Bessy, she determined to carry with her a swarm of colonists to her new home: to people the waste with millions of workers; the toiling, happy bond-folk—(pity there should be any other!)—of imperial man.

And the bees were of the old Jogtrot stock. Of the family that had worked in the gardens and orchards of Marigolds; descendants in right regal descent of the same line that had sung and worked about Bessy's childhood; that had awakened her infant thought, had engaged her youthful care. We believe that Robert Topps had been Bessy's silent agent in the work; and with consummate skill and secresy had conveyed away a hive of the old household from their native village, taking them to nurse at a certain gardener's, some three or four miles distant from Primrose Place. And thither, to learn how fared the little ones, wended Bessy and her father. The old man, though doubtful of the prosperity of the scheme, nevertheless entered into it with all the cordiality of his nature. "There's always a sure comfort about attempting good ; delight if you succeed, and consolation if you fail." With this creed, Carraways listened with pleasure to the plan of Bessy, who had kept the scheme a secret from her mother and Basil.

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* The earliest attempt to introduce bees from England was made by Mrs. Wills, in May 1842; but this first colony died on the passage. Shortly afterwards, a healthy hive sent by Mrs. Allom, of London, arrived safely, and was established at Nelson.—*Handbook for New Zealand.*

"Won't they be surprised, when they see them aboard the ship," cried Bessy, glowing with pleasure. (And by the way, in the course of the two past paragraphs, Bessy and her father have reached the gardener's, and are now in front of the very hive ; close to the swarm of insect colonists, the pilgrim bees, the emigrant honey-makers.) "Won't they be surprised ! " repeated Bessy.

"Well, I doubt," said Carraways, smiling down upon the hive, "I doubt, if Queen Dido—yes, I think it was Dido—carried with her more useful colonists ; and I take it, say what they will, few so innocent." Bessy looked inquiringly.—"I don't think you know much of Queen Dido, my dear ; and to say the truth, my school knowledge with the lady was at the best a nodding acquaintance. But, if you can only preserve them ! " and the old gentleman folded his hands thoughtfully.

"Oh, I have no fear of that. I am certain, dear father—I feel so sure of it—they will arrive with us all safe and well. And then "—

"And then, my love,"—said the old man—"you will not have lived in vain. No, my child, you will have done your share in the great human work—have obeyed the behest that lays it as a solemn task on all to share with all the good that, for some wise end, was only meted to a few. Only land the bees safe ; let the swarm be but well upon the wing ; let them once set to work, making honey—the new manna in the wilderness—where honey was never made before,—why do this, Bessy, and you are greater than any of the men Queens that ever lived—greater than any of the topping masculine ladies out of place in petticoats. Catherine and Christina and such folks—hm ! very great no doubt,—but their memory is not exactly kept in honey. And Queen Elizabeth—yes, an extraordinary virgin—but what a small stinging insect in a stomacher—how useless to the world is Queen Elizabeth against Queen Bee ! "

"I am sure they will live," repeated Bessy ; "and 'twill be such nice employment, during the voyage, to take care of them. And then, in a little time when they swarm and swarm "—

"Why, then, my dear—yes, I see it all"—and the old man, with a thoughtful smile, and as though dallying with a fancy, continued—"I see it all, and can prophesy. In some hundred years or so, when men think it the true glory to build up, not to destroy; when work, not slaughter, is the noble thing; when, in a word, the eagles of war shall be scouted as carrion fowl, and the bees of the garden shall be the honoured type of human wisdom,—why, then, Bessy,—then, my child—that is some hundred years to come—in the city that will then flourish, I predict that the people will raise a statue to the memory of the woman who gave to the Antipodes the household glory of the honey-bee."

"Oh, father!" cried Bessy.

"If the bees prosper, why you and Basil shall in the new country take a bee for your crest; by the way, not at all bad emigrant heraldry," laughed the old man. "Let me see; a bee *or* on a thistle proper. And the motto, '*Honey from suffering!*' A good Christian legend," said Carraways. "And then, in a hundred years, as I predict, a statue "—

"A statue!" and Bessy laughed.

"Well," said the father with a gentle seriousness, "I'm getting old, Bessy. But I feel 'tis good—very good—to gain hope for the world, even as we gain years. It makes the sweeter sunset for our human day."

And now anticipating awhile, we have only to say that at the proper season the hive was tenderly conveyed on board the *Halcyon*, there to await the cares of its coming mistress.

Looking in—as we are permitted to do—at the chamber-window of Basil, we find him assorting friends and companions for his future home. Though a wild sportive lad—bouncing through the early chapters of this veracious history,—he was so deeply touched by his love of Bessy; so suddenly pulled up to a serious contemplation of the world, by the strange events of his family,—that, after a brief pause, he sprang, as at a bound, to a nobler, higher view of human dealings. Hence, he had soon gathered some glorious books. A blessed companion is a book! A book that, fitly chosen, is a life-long friend. A book—the unfailing Damon to his loving Pythias. A book that—at a touch—pours its heart into our own.

And some of these friends, with looks that may not alter, with tones that cannot change,—Basil set apart for his companions in the wilds. As he chose them one by one — for some must remain behind, he might not take them all—he looked gravely down upon them; with almost a tenderness of touch laid them aside,—his fellow-voyagers. Some twoscore were selected; special friends. There they lay; motionless and dumb. And yet the chamber was filled with lovely presences; was sounding with spiritual voices: the beautiful and mighty populace, evoked by the memory of the living friend—the friend in the flesh, the companion and the scholar of the souls of the dead.

And this was Basil's last employment, the day before his bridal. He marshalled a magnificent array of friends to bear him company in the wilderness. He carried with him an invisible host of bright spirits; spirits of every kind and degree; and all friends—sound friends;—of friendship made in solitude; and without patch or lacker, lasting to the grave.

Five minutes, reader; and your company to the once decent lodging—now turned topsy-turvy—of Mr. and Mrs. Topps. They, too, are in the very fury of packing-up. Or rather, Mrs. Topps and two or three friends. For Robert and his father-in-law—Goodman White, late and future schoolmaster—remain passively in the way; both of them discussing the apparent merits of some score of young rooks; that Bob, on his own account, and as a special offering to his old master Carraways, had with some difficulty and danger, kidnapped from the high-top elms that surround Jogtrot Hall. Bob, in his snatch of reading, had learned that rooks were at the Antipodes precious as birds of paradise. He had therefore obtained some twenty nestlings, "very sarcy upon their legs, indeed." They would be worth their weight in gold, he declared to his father-in-law, to pick up the worms and the grubs.

"It's a capital thing for a bird or a brute," said Bob, "to be born to be of some use. Eh?" The schoolmaster assented. "Now, I shouldn't have liked to be born a magpie—or a weasel; it's like being born a thief"—

"I doubt, aye, I more than doubt whether anybody's born a thief," said White.

"I'm not a scholar,—that is, compared to you; I can't say. But a rook is a serviceable cretur; he earns his living; and nobody can't grudge it him. They *are* precious hearty, arn't they?" and Bob, with an eye of pride surveyed the nestlings. "There's only one thing that I'm sorry about: but it's impossible—and this it is; I am only sorry we couldn't take the trees from the Hall, too."

"Ha! We shall find trees enough there," said White, intent upon the birds. "Well, they *are* strong!"

"No fear of they're making capital sailors. And they'll be quite company, won't they, to feed 'em, and watch their ways? And what's more, when we get reg'larly settled, why their noise will always remind us of England. How they will caw and caw, eh! Rather have 'em with us"—and Bob slapt his leg to emphasise the preference,—"rather have 'em than a band of music."

And the sun set and rose and shone out the bridal morning. As the good folks of Primrose Place had determined that the ceremony should be performed with the best quiet and simplicity, we are left but little to do as chroniclers of the marriage. We may merely observe that Bessy flushed into a positive beauty; and her mother, as Carraways said, had somehow flung clean away twelve or fourteen years from her face, determined on that occasion only to look the bride's elder sister. Miss Barnes, the bridesmaid—for Carraways would have none other—was, despite of herself, sad. The event seemed to bring into her face, a past history. Of Basil we have nothing to say; the bridegroom is so rarely interesting.

Topps claimed the privilege of driving the bride to church. (The slim Mrs. Topps, with riband and bows, had burst out in white like a cherry-tree in brilliant blossom). Topps, however, to the passing — very passing disquiet — of Carraways, who wished everything to be so simple, drove to the door with a white favour in his hat, as big as a ventilator; a favour in his coat; and four favours to match on the heads of the horses.

"A stupid fellow!" said Carraways.

"Well, after all, my dear," said his wife, "I don't know if Robert isn't right. There's no harm in a bit of riband; and why should we steal to church as if we were ashamed of what we're doing? What do you think, Miss Barnes?"

"It's quite right," said Carraways; for he well knew what Miss Barnes would think. "Drive on, Robert."

In a short time the bridal party reached St. Asphodel's church. A short time and Basil and Bessy stand hand in hand at the altar. The minutes pass; and the lover's destinies—as before their hearts—grow into one. The priest is silent; and "amen" like consecrating balm, hallows the mystery.

And then father and mother, and humble friends, gather close to the wedded; press them and bless them. And the spirits that await on human trustfulness, and human hope, when plighted to each other to make the best and lightest of the world's journey, be it through a garden or over a desert; arrayed with roses, or strown with flint—the spirits that sanctify and strengthen simple faith and all unrwoldly love,—hover about bride and bridegroom, and as they take their way from the church, bless them on their pilgrimage.

Another hour, and Robert Topps is again in attendance at Primrose Place. Trunks are brought to the door, and packed on the carriage; and in a few minutes Basil hands his wife to her seat. There has been a shower of tears within at the separation; though mother and daughter are to meet again in so short a time. For be it known that Basil and his bride are westward bound, to pass the first three or four days of the honeymoon on the coast; to be duly taken thence by the good ship *Halcyon* calling there on the voyage out.

It may have been at the very minute that Basil and his bride quitted Primrose Place, that a letter was delivered at Jericho House. The letter was for Miss Pennibacker, written in the pangs of disappointment, in the agony of a broken heart, by the Hon. Cesar Candituft. We sum up the meaning of the epistle, gladly avoiding the fulness of its contents—gladly, too, avoiding any attempted description of the profound astonishment, disgust, and horror, of poor Monica. It may be remembered that the lover, baulked of the dowry by the loathsome avarice of Mr. Jericho, was fain to trust to the successful issue of some vague law-suit for the means of married life in its required magnificence. Well, the uncertainty of the law, is a grim joke that generations of men have suffered and bled under. And—to be brief—Candituft after his late visit to Jericho House, discovered that, with the best of causes he had the worst of luck, and so—and so—with a bleeding heart he released from all her vows the betrayed Monica. He was about to leave London, to seek consolation in the society of his brother-in-law and his sweet sister.

"The villain!" cried Monica, "and after I had been brought to promise him my hand! To leave me, and perhaps for another!"

"The cruel creature!" and Agatha spoke of Hodmadod—"after I had cured his hand, to go before my face, and give it to that—that little scorpion!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

Though Mrs. Jericho had failed in her hopes of sympathetic assistance from the friends she had summoned about her, she would not quit the field. She would dispute the ground inch by inch. On her final interview with Basil—she would rather not see Bessy, she wished to be spared the trial—she declared that, albeit Mr. Jericho was strangely wayward, it was but a passing whim. However, be that as it might, it was her duty as a wife and mother to remain where she was. And Basil, having taken his measures that, at the worst, his mother and sisters might be protected, bade them a gay farewell; for he felt that the separation would be only for a short time. "My dear mother," he said, "in a while, and you'll be making pumpkin pie in a log-hut; as rosy as the ruddiest milkmaid." Mrs. Jericho smiled very wanly at the picture. "And you, girls, why, what hands you'll be at rearing chicks, and fattening pigs!" The young ladies shuddered at the thought. And when Basil prophesied for them a brace of stalwart farmers for husbands, why, in their own words, "their blood ran cold at the bare idea."

Meanwhile our Man of Money hugged himself in his triumph. He had despoiled his wife and her daughters of the costly gifts that in his hours of ignorant weakness had been beguiled from him. And when he looked at the jewels—when he knew that they were his own again,—the victory was saddened by the despairing thought that, he could by no known means, repossess himself of all the money—all he had wasted upon them. "No; no. It is a curse to think it, but *they* cannot to the crucible. They cannot yield up an ounce — nay not a grain — of the glorious money cast away upon their pampered flesh—their mincing appetites—their brainsick whims. No: that money is gone; buried in the graves of vanity, and gluttony, and show. Gone! Gone! In another land I might have sold those milk-faced witches for something to reimburse me. But there is no help for it here—none." These savage and fantastic thoughts fermented in the brain of Jericho; and, still defeated in his moody musings, he would still return to the idea of his loss, to the hope to cover it. "To think that they—the sleek white cats!—to think that they should be the tombs wherein I have buried so much! To think that they should have so devoured me! That they should have worn my heart! Should have been arrayed with my life! Should have worn it in their ears, about their tiny wrists! Nay, should have trod upon it, in their damned glass slippers! And not a penny—not a penny can I melt from them!" And then, as some consolation, the miser would look at the jewels—the plunder he had secured. Any way, that was something snatched from the wreck. Yet it was hard to gain nothing more. Hard to know that the cost of past days, the by-gone pomp and luxury,—was irrevocable as the departed hours.

The Man of Money sat crouched in the scullion's garret. His sordid serving-man—with his eyes fiercely bent upon his master; his mouth curved with a sharp grin, as though he read odd, strange, diabolic matter in the brain laid bare to his looks—his servant Plutus stood apart. The morning was come, and in a while, the buyers would crowd to purchase; to buy the contents of the mansion bit by bit, so that—as Jericho rejoiced—he might carry them in his pocket.

"There's some of them," said Jericho, turning up his cheek as the knocker struck through the house. The Man of Money, followed by his servant, descended the stairs with tripping pace. "Bring them to me—here," said Jericho, passing into a room; whilst the menial proceeded to the door. "Not gone, yet—not yet!" exclaimed the Man of Money to his weeping wife as, pale and trembling, she approached him.

"My dear Solomon,"—

"Well?" answered Jericho, with hyena laugh, "well, my very dear wife?"

"For the last time, let me supplicate you," said the woman.

"I am content, for the last time. Well, go on; supplicate," answered the Man of Money.

"You will destroy us," exclaimed the poor wife—"utterly, utterly destroy us."

"Well? I know it—I know it," answered Jericho. "And may I not destroy what I have made? You were all beggars when I took ye, and to beggars ye shall return. The rags, with my blood, were changed into gold-cloth. Now, I'll have my blood again—I will—and you shall have your rags."

"Dear Jericho! This is madness," cried the wife.

"No, it isn't," answered Jericho, with a strange calmness. "It isn't madness, my dear, dear spouse, as the wise Doctor Mizzlemist has signified. Oh, it was a rare meeting! How happy you might have been! What rare junketings, here! What a world of fashion, making this house a heaven,—and the poor devil, the madman owner, the maniac bone of your bone—

the lunatic flesh of your flesh—fast bound, fast barred! What music you would have had—and he, the Bedlamite, howling to the moon. Go!" yelled the Man of Money, stamping his thin noiseless foot upon the floor; but the woman, drawing herself up, resolved to stand her ground. "What! you thought because you had not yet eaten the fruit, you would never taste its bitterness?"

"What fruit? What bitterness?" cried Mrs. Jericho, rising in spirit.

Jericho gave no direct reply. Hugging his arms about him, he swayed to and fro. "Some lies," he cried, "like some truths, are of long growth ere they bear; but they do bear at last. Now, the lie you sowed"—

"I!" exclaimed the indignant wife.

"The lie you sowed,"—repeated Jericho doggedly—"fell upon hard ground, 'tis true. The altar stone, no less. Still, the lie has sprouted, has struck root; has shot up, and its fruit—like the fruit of every lie, I know that much now—is bitterness. The wine it makes is misery, to the dregs of life—and you shall drink your fill of it. No; I am not mad; even, saying this, I am not mad;" cried Jericho, for he marked the eloquent meaning of the woman's looks—"not mad, but enlightened. This is not frenzy, madam; but wisdom—withering wisdom," sighed Jericho, and there was such a sound of human suffering in the words that, with a smile in her face, the wife looked up at her persecutor.

"My dear, you are not well—this is"—

"Why stay you here?" cried the Man of Money, with the old ferocity. "Why will you not be warned? Well, well, take your own way—you know best; you know best. But in a few hours, and there's not a bed left for your fine, costly bones to lie upon. Now, will you depart?" cried Jericho.

"No," exclaimed the wife. "I know my course. I am advised.' Jericho laughed. "Oh, do not doubt that," repeated the angry woman. "I will not quit the house while a tatter remains. It shall be your work to leave me destitute, and then"—

"Aye, destitute; as I took you. The rich widow—the Indian queen—the sultana"—

"The man of wealth—the shipowner—the holder of stocks—the golden merchant"—

"Well, and has it turned out otherwise?" asked Jericho, sullenly and proudly. "Has my wealth been wanting? Did I cheat you? Have you not shared and shared? Have you not cursed me? You married me for your money-drudge—your golden slave. And still, with your speech you goaded me; still with that whip of asp—a shrew's tongue—you scourged me. Money—money! And despairingly I wished even of the fiend for money. I have my wish"—and Jericho slowly fixed his eyes upon his wife, whose sympathy returned with the man's suffering—fixed his eyes, whilst his face became ghastly pale, though with the paleness came back something of the calmer look of former days—"I have my wish," groaned Jericho, spreading his hand upon his breast—"and—I feel it—I am damned for it."

"Husband!" cried the wife, and her arm sought to embrace him. "Heavens!" she screamed in terror; and with her arm—some time divorced—around her husband, her blood stood frozen at the change. His body seemed as a wand—a willow wand. The wife trembled, and did not dare to look at what she deemed monstrous — devilish. With her heart beating thick, her brow bedewed, her arm fell as dead to her side.

"The brain burns brightest, I have heard," said Jericho, with mournful, meaning voice—with features pale and tranquil, and with a gleam of their old expression—"brightest a while before 'tis clay—if it be so, in the running of some minutes, I *was*. My God! What do I see?" and Jericho stared with eyes suddenly lustrous, "What do I see?" he groaned. "The skeletons of things! Outside beauty has departed, and here—here I stand—in a house of dust. I know that was some fine thing upon you—some silken rag of pride—and now it is a web of dust—of woven dust! I look upon your face—that fine, large, glowing, breathing lie that was, and it is a lie no longer. No; it is resolved into the one truth — the universal dust, the *caput mortuum* of the last day."

"My love," said the wife, with a voice of terror; but the man possessed would not hear.

"Why could I not see this before? Why, I know that thing about your neck was gold; *is* gold still to the blind ignorance of the world. It is a piece of yellow dust; so light, a breath must scatter it. All dust. Your fine, proud, sweeping body! Why, now I see it as it is. I could crumble it with my hands. And your heart, I see that too! And what is called the blood passing through it. Blood! why, it is a gush of sand. And your brain?—as busy as an ant-hill; as busy and as earthy."

"My dear," said the wife, struck with the change, yet fain to play the comforter, "you are better now?"

"Much better; for I can see through all things. Why had I not one glance of this before? Are we only to know what dirt is pride and pomp, only to know it when the tongue begins to taste the clay? But it is no matter," and the wild look again dawned in the sick man's face. Again, the fierce, wild, violent spirit, grew strong within him. "It is no matter. All's well. Very well! As I said—as I said. I am rich, and I am damned for it. I have earned hell—well earned it"—

"For the love of heaven," cried the woman in despair, for the moment feeling a partner in the horror.

"None of that! No cowardice! No craven—twelfth-hour puling. Be honest when you can't help it. 'Twas a bargain; a fair bargain with hell. So let the devil have his own. And mark you! Woman of sin—thing of smiles and fraud! you and your young hags take a witch's flight, and be gone. You had best—much best. Wait another day, and there'll not be a broomstick to fly with."

And here, introduced by Plutus—how Mrs. Jericho shuddered at the creature's presence!—came certain tradesmen; wreckers never absent when a fortune founders. Israel, Laban, and Issachar stood before the Man of Money, who, on the instant, returned to his hungry, ravenous self. Yes; at sight of the dealers, the face of Jericho put on its former wickedness; and philosophy and remorse were dumb and dead, and cunning and avarice again active and voluble. With a contemptuous chuck of the head, Jericho acknowledged the presence of the chapmen, and then turned fiercely upon his wife. "Are you advised now? A few hours, and if you will stay here, you shall rule the mistress of naked walls. Go!" And the poor woman, with terror in her looks, fled from the spot. How—in that moment—she accused the lingering, guilty pride, that had withheld her from communing with Basil! How willingly would she have followed him! With what alacrity have flung aside, like tarnished finery, her present life, and drawn the breath of simplicity and peace! And with this thought she sought her daughters. This thought she uttered with fervent utterance; and found no according sympathy. But youth is apt to be disdainful. And so it was with Monica, so even with the less courageous Agatha. Both of them bade their mother—she herself had taught the lesson, and now her pupils bade her not forget it—have a nobler spirit. They were prepared to defy the tyrant to the last! Indeed, in a wild, passionate moment, burning with revenge, Monica laughing and clapping her hands, declared it would be noble sport to set fire to the house, and all perish in the flames. Poor girl! We verily believe she had no such wicked intention. She only spoke from a desperate waywardness of spirit; for it must not be forgotten that the treasonous letter of the dastard Candituft —(he married, ten years after, a tyrannous old maid, with enormous expectations that ripened into nothing better than erysipelas)—the coward letter, like a live coal, was eating up Monica's heart. However, the mother was re-assured by the spirit of her children; and having gathered together all the property—body goods, no other—allowed them by the tyrant Man of Money, was resolved to stay to the last. Neither would she take the judgment of the jury of friends as final. She must believe—moreover Monica, upon the strength of her grey experience was convinced—that the law was too kind, too just and benevolent towards feeble woman, not to dethrone and confine for life, her maniac despot.

In the meantime, the dealers, accompanied by Jericho, prowled from room to room. Furniture, plate, pictures—all that had made the glory of Jericho—were duly considered and duly debased by the men who wished to make them their own. For a while, Jericho endured the chaffering of the tribe. At length, he suddenly drew up. "Look ye, here," said the Man of Money, prepared at once to make clean work of it; for his impatience subdued his avarice,—"Look ye, here, I treat with men of honour; with scrupulous merchants whose only wish is a fair profit. I know this, gentlemen. The tone of your voices, the clear look of your eyes, the sterling worth of your words, as we have passed from room to room, considering the goods,—all convince me that I am safe in your hands."

Israel, Laban, and Issachar, staring somewhat, bowed.

"Safe in your hands," repeated Jericho. "Well, then, why should we waste time? I want to be quit of this. I want, at a thought, to melt all you see and have seen, into ready money. I know I must be a mighty loser. Oh yes! For money never was so scarce—trade never so very dead. This I knew before; so not a word about it now. Well then, worthy gentlemen, princely dealers, take counsel with yourselves, and to save a public hubbub—for I would pass from this fiery furnace of a house, this mansion burning with gold, to the peaceful corner I have provided me. You understand?"—

Again Israel, Laban, and Issachar, bowed. They understood perfectly.

"Take counsel, I say, and make me an offer, a lumping offer for the whole. Eh?"

Israel, Laban, and Issachar were impressed with the comprehensive largeness of the thought. It would save time, and trouble, and the liberal, the right royal Jericho would be a gainer—there could be no doubt of it—a great gainer in the end.

"Fellow," and Jericho turned to his serf, "conduct the merchants into every corner. And gentlemen, let me have your offer—be it ever so rough a guess, still something like it—your offer to-night. No later; to-night."

Israel, Laban, and Issachar, with their hearts glowing in their eyes, and smiling at their mouths, rubbed their hands, and promised. The magnificent Jericho should have their offer in the evening. They, the merchant friends—old associates, time-tried fellows—with one another would soon decide; and—there should be no miss in the matter—a plain, distinct offer should be made in the evening.

Whereupon, the Man of Money ascended to his garret, and the dealers pursued their occupation. There was only one apartment shut against them. And here, Mrs. Jericho and her daughters defied a siege. Every other place was searched, and every article scanned by the dealers, who at length with a grave joy departed from the house, big with the belief in a glorious pennyworth.

The Man of Money sat alone in his garret. Evening closed in, and the moon rose, and looked reproachfully at the miser. The same moon that looked so tenderly upon millions; the same moon that shone upon the silvery sails of the *Halcyon*, flying like a sea-bird to its home.

The Man of Money started in his chair. "What's that?" The garret door opened. "You,—is't not?"

"I," answered the slave Plutus.

"Well? Has it come?" cried the master.

"Here it is," answered the servant; and he laid a letter upon the table.

"Well, now for their conscience!" exclaimed the Man of Money. "Go, while I read it," and the servant departed. "Stay, dog. A light—I cannot read else. Do you hear? A light."

The fellow came not in; but his voice was heard without. "There is a candle on the table; and paper prepared to light it."

Most precious paper! The heart's flesh and blood of the Man of Money. For the devilish serving-man had folded a note—(how obtained, can it matter?)—a note peeled from the breast of his master; a piece of money, a part of the damned Jericho, sympathising with him.

The Man of Money took the paper, (the devil with his ear upturned crept closer to the door) then thrust it amidst the dying coals. A moment, and the garret is rent as with a lightning flash.

Yelling, and all on fire the Man of Money falls prostrate, with hell in his face. Then his lips move, but not a sound is heard. And the fire communicated by the sympathy of the living note—the flesh of his flesh—like a snake of flame, glides up his limbs, devouring them. And so he is consumed. A minute; and the Man of Money is a thin, black paper ash. Now, the night wind stirs it; and now, a sudden breeze carries the cinerous corpse away, fluttering it to dust impalpable.

And at the moment, the possessions of Jericho—all he had bought with his flesh, and blood, and soul—all was blasted to tinder, consumed to ashes. The pictures dropt in dust from the walls; the walls crumbled; the very gold the wretch had hoarded became as nought.

Candituft looked at his diamond ring—the gift of Jericho—and it was a speck of charcoal. Bones and Thrush, drawing forth their golden snuff-boxes, found in their hands two lumps of soot.

Mrs. Jericho and her daughters were alike disenchanted. The very moment Jericho passed away in flame, they found themselves in garments of tinder.

And thus were all things of the Man made of Money—things of dust and ashes.

The night has passed, and day—lovely summer time—smiles a benison upon the world. The *Halcyon*, with her sea-pilgrims aboard, lies-to off the western shore. There are two voyagers yet to come. And there—a thing no bigger than a nautilus—a boat comes shooting out; tussling and bounding with the breeze and sea, and now fairly leaping from wave to wave towards the ship, as with the instinct of some creature towards its parent breast. "There they are!" shouts Carraways, and his wife cries and laughs—and Jenny Topps jumps about—and Robert claps his hands—and Old White blesses himself—and Doctor Dodo smiles, and Mrs. Dodo is so happy—and the nine children Dodos—baby at the breast counting for nothing—give a scream and a shout of delight!

Another minute, and the boat is alongside. And there are bride and bridegroom,—there is Bessy with such happiness filling her good face, with Basil's arm around her—and Basil looking proud of his treasure! Another minute, and Bessy is upon the deck in her mother's arms; and Basil grasps the hand of father Carraways.

Captain Goodbody's eye—he sees all but says little—glistens at the meeting. The boat's cast off—all's right.

"'Bout ship!" cries the Captain. The yards swing round; the canvas fills as with the breath of good spirits. May such await the trusting and courageous hearts our vessel carries—await on them and all who, seeking a new home, sail the mighty deep!

END OF A MAN MADE OF MONEY.

THE

CHRONICLES OF CLOVERNOOK.

THE

CHRONICLES OF CLOVERNOOK;

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF

The Hermit of Bellyfulle.

WE have yet no truthful map of England. No offence to the publishers; but the verity must be uttered. We have pored and pondered, and gone to our sheets with weak, winking eyes, having vainly searched, we cannot trust ourselves to say how many hundred maps of our beloved land, for the exact whereabout of Clovernook. We cannot find it. More: we doubt—so imperfect are all the maps—if any man can drop his finger on the spot, can point to the blessed locality of that most blissful village. He could as easily show to us the hundred of Utopia; the glittering weathercocks of the New Atlantis.

And shall we be more communicative than the publishers? No; the secret shall be buried with us; we will hug it under our shroud. We have heard of shrewd, short-speeched men who were the living caskets of some healing jewel; some restorative recipe to draw the burning fangs from gout; some anodyne to touch away sciatica into the lithesomeness of a kid; and these men have died, and have, to their own satisfaction at least, carried the secret into their coffins, as though the mystery would comfort them as they rotted. There have been such men; and the black, begrimed father of all uncharitableness sits cross-legged upon their tombstones, and sniggers over them.

Nevertheless, we will not tell to the careless and irreverent world—a world noisy with the ringing of shillings—the whereabout of Clovernook. We might, would we condescend, give an all-sufficient reason for our closeness: we will do no such thing. No: the village is our own—consecrated to our own delicious leisure, when time runs by like a summer brook, dimpling and sweetly murmuring as it runs. We have the most potent right of freehold in the soil; nay, it is our lordship. We have there *droits du seigneur;* and in the very despotism of our ownership might, if we would, turn oaks into gibbets. Let this knowledge suffice to the reader; for we will not vouchsafe to him another pippin's-worth.

Thus much, however, we will say of the history of Clovernook. There is about it a very proper mist and haziness; it twinkles far, far away through the darkness of time, like a taper through a midnight casement. The spirit of fable that dallies with the vexed heart of man, and incarnates his dreams in living presences —for mightiest of the mighty is oft the muscle of fiction—fable says that Clovernook was the work of some sprite of Fancy, that in an idle and extravagant mood, made it a choice country seat; a green and flowery place, peopled with happy faces. And it was created, says fable, after this fashion.

The sprite took certain pieces of old, fine linen, which were torn and torn, and reduced to a very pulp, and then made into a substance, thin and spotless. And then the sprite flew away to distant woods, and gathered certain things, from which was expressed a liquid of darkest dye. And then, after the old, time-honoured way, a living thing was sacrificed; a bird much praised by men at Michaelmas, fell with bleeding throat; and the sprite, plucking a feather from the poor dead thing, waved and waved it, and the village of Clovernook grew and grew; and cottages, silently as trees, rose from the earth; and men and women came there by twos and fours; and in good time smoke rose from chimneys, and cradles were rocked. And this, so saith fable, was the beginning of Clovernook.

Although we will not let the rabble of the world know the whereabout of our village—and by the rabble, be it understood, we do not mean the wretches who are guilty of daily hunger, and are condemned in the court of poverty of the high misdemeanour of patches and rags,—but we mean the mere money-changers, the folks who carry their sullen souls in the corners of their pockets, and think the site of Eden is covered with the Mint; although we will not have Clovernook startled from its sweet, dreamy serenity—and we have sometimes known the very weasels in mid-day to doze there, given up to the delicious influence of the place—by the chariot-wheels of that stony-hearted old dowager, Lady Mammon, with her false locks and ruddled cheeks,—we invite all others to our little village; where they may loll in the sun or shade as suits them; lie along on the green tufty sward, and kick their heels at fortune: where they may jig an evening dance in the meadows, and after retire to the inn—the one inn of Clovernook—glorified under the sign of "Gratis!"

Match us that sign if you can. What are your Georges and Dragons, your Kings' Heads, and Queens' Arms; your Lions, Red, White, and Black; your Mermaids and your Dolphins, to that large, embracing benevolence—Gratis? Doth not the word seem to throw its arms about you with a hugging welcome? Gratis! It is the voice of Nature, speaking from the fulness of her large heart. The word is written all over the blue heaven. The health-giving air whispers it about us. It rides the sunbeam—(save when statesmen put a pane 'twixt us and it). The lark trills it high up in its skyey dome; the little wayside flower breathes gratis from its pinky mouth; the bright brook murmurs it; it is written in the harvest moon. Look and move where we will, delights—all "gratis," all breathing and beaming beauty—are about us; and yet how rarely do we seize the happiness, because, forsooth, it *is* a joy gratis?

But let us back to Clovernook. We offer it as a country tarrying-place for all who will accept its hospitality. We will show every green lane about it; every clump of trees; every bit of woodland, mead and dell. The villagers, too, may be found, upon acquaintance, not altogether boors. There are some strange folk among them. Men who have wrestled in the world, and have had their victories and their trippings-up; and now they have nothing to do but keep their little bits of garden-ground pranked with the earliest flowers; their only enemies, weeds, slugs, and snails. Odd people, we say it, are amongst them. Men, whose minds have been strangely carved and fashioned by the world; cut like odd fancies in walnut-tree; but though curious and grotesque, the minds are sound, with not a worm-hole in them. And these men meet in summer under the broad mulberry-tree before the "Gratis," and tell their stories—thoughts, humours; yea, their dreams. They have nothing to do but to consider that curious bit of clock-work, the mind, within them; and droll it sometimes is, to mark how they will try to take it to pieces, and then again to adjust its little wheels, its levers, and springs.

Some of these worthy folk may, in good time, be made known to our readers. But our first business is to introduce to them a most wise, and withal jocund sage, dwelling about a mile and three quarters from Clovernook, and known to the villagers as the Hermit of Bellyfulle. It was a happy chance that brought the anchorite and ourselves together. Thus it happened.

An autumn day had died gloriously in the west; darkness came rapidly upon us, and to be brief with our mishap, we had lost our way. We had travelled from ———, a market-town, and as our saddle-bags—for we were upon our choice gelding—were, strangely enough, stuffed with the lawful golden coin of the realm, our fears rose with our sense of property. Again and again we thought of our gold, and thinking, sweated. To our apprehension, the gelding's legs became as eight; for though we saw no horse following us, yet could we certainly distinguish the sound of eight hoofs. We kept up a sharp trot, and oddly enough, the gelding that half-an-hour before showed signs of weariness and distress, trotted, trotted on as though fresh from a night's rest, corn and beans. As we went on, everything seemed strangely changing about us. The sky that had been black as coal, broke into a mild, clear grey; star by star came twinkling out; the cold, autumn wind blew soft and warm; our spirits became suddenly lightened, when our gelding—it is a most sagacious beast—made a dead halt.

The creature stood fast, and we looked vainly about us. We saw nothing—heard nothing. The animal still stood as upon a pedestal. And now, it pricked its ears—and now, snuffed, snuffed the air. Then the truth, in truth's best sweetness, came upon us. We were close to a human dwelling-place; we were in the neighbourhood of some of the units of the large family of man. Hope could not have deceived us: no, the truth was plain; for we smelt a smell of eggs and bacon.

Now, the gelding had merely paused to awaken our attention to the odorous fact. This opinion we carry, fast as a clenched nail, within us. For we merely took a deep inspiration, jerked our right knee against the saddle, and Bottom—for such is the beast's name—immediately understood that we had taken his meaning, and with mended step, went ambling on, as though his soul danced to the music of the frying-pan. A most rational beast is Bottom.

Still, we trotted on, down close, winding, mossy lanes—with odd, large, gnarled trees, throwing their arms across the narrow road, and sometimes meeting and hugging one another, like Titan wrestlers. There was something strange in the trees; something, as we thought, half-human: now and then they looked like giants; and now, we thought we saw the red goat-like noses of satyrs among the branches, with a quick jerking of their horned heads. Once or twice, thinking of our saddle-bags, we should have fainted from sheer cowardice; but as Bottom ambled onward, there was an increasing, a sustaining smell of bacon and eggs.

At length, Bottom stopt in a sort of triangular nook. There was no outlet. We looked; was it a glowworm glimmering through that mass of green? No: it was tallow, delicious, household tallow; or if not, oil from leviathan. We dismounted, and groping our way, at length, through a wilderness of woodbine and ivy, found the door. We knocked.

"Come in," cried a voice, loud as a trumpet.

Melodious syllables! Sweet accents of sweet hospitality! Harmonious to the traveller on the outside, glorifying to the man at the hearth! He has escaped somewhat of the smitings of this single-stick world, who, when he hears knuckles at his postern, can throw himself back in his chair like a king upon his throne, and without a qualm of the heart, cry—"Come in!"

In darkness, we clawed about the door; at length we found the latch. In a moment we were at the hearthstone of the greatest animal in the scale of creation—an animal that cooks.

"And who are you?" cried the master of the mansion.

What a pert, every-day asking is this! What a query to answer! Reader, did you ever, for one moment, say to your own soul,—"Who are you?" You know that you are a something, but *what* thing? You know that there is some living power, some knack within you, that helps you through life; that enables you to make a bargain with an eye to a good pennyworth; that even urges you to pick a wife from a few millions; that walks with you in your business walks, that broods with you at home over your ledger—but what is it? Did you ever try to bring it face to face with yourself? Did you ever manfully endeavour to pluck, for a moment, this mystery from your blood, and look at it eye to eye—this You? It may be a terrible meeting; but sit in the magic circle of your own thoughts, and conjure the thing. It may be devil—it may be angel. No. You will take the chance; you are not curious: you are content to jog on; you know that you are you; but for the *what* you, whether perfect as the angels, or scabbed like Lazarus, why should you seek to know? Rather, dwell in the hopeful sweetness of your no-knowing.

"And who are you?" again asked the man we had elected for our host, ere we had time or thought to answer.

"We are travelling, and have lost our way," said we.

"Sit down and eat," said the master of the mansion. "And then, if the world has left you a light conscience, you can, if you will, sleep."

"We'll first see to Bottom, and then have with you," said we: for there was a ring of truth and good-fellowship in the man's voice, that, as we felt, made us old acquaintance. We crossed the threshold, and taking saddle and bridle from Bottom, sent him to his supper of sweet grass. We then returned to our host

"And what brought you here?" he asked, offering the dish.

"Bacon and eggs," said we, helping ourselves to the glorious condiments bearing those names.

The man paused, looked down upon us, scratched the nape of his neck, and walked to a corner of his habitation. He then returned with a blushing gammon, which he sliced with the potent hand of a master. Smiling upon our appetite, he cracked a dozen or two more eggs, and flung them singing into the pan.

We would give a hundred guineas from the aforesaid saddle-bags, we thought, if we could carry away with us a lively portrait of our host. We shall never forget him: he will to our mind always be a stirring presence; but how—how shall we ever fix him upon paper?

"You don't eat," said our host, seeing our knife and fork for a moment idle, as we mused upon the difficulty. "Eat, eat, if you'd be welcome to the Hermit of Bellyfulle."

"Are you a hermit?" we asked, with a wondering look.

"Have I not said it? The Hermit of Bellyfulle, and this my Hermitage; this the Cell of the Corkscrew," cried the anchorite; and he then turned to the pan, his eye melting on the frying eggs.

The Hermit appeared between fifty and sixty—nearer sixty. He would have looked tall, but for his breadth of shoulder and bow of belly. His arms were short, thick, and sinewy; with a fist that might have throttled a wild boar or a keen attorney. Altogether he was a massive lump of a man, hard and active. His face was big and round, with a rich, larder look about it. His wide, red cheeks were here and there jewelled with good living. As gems are said by some to be no more than a congelation of the rarest essences attracted and distilled from mother earth, so were the living rubies burning in the cheeks of the Hermit, the hardened, incarnated juices of the deer of the forest—the volatile spirits of the vine. The Hermit had no nose; none, ladies, none. There was a little nob of flesh, like a small mushroom, dipt in wine, which made its unobtrusive way between the good man's cheeks, and through which he has been known to sneeze: but impudence itself could not call that piece of flesh a nose. The Hermit's mouth had all the capacity of large benevolence; large and wide, like an old pocket. There seemed a heavy unctuousness about the lower lip; a weight and drooping from very mellowness—like a ripe peach, cracking in the sun. His teeth—but that he had lost one, as we afterwards learned, in active service on a Strasburg ham—were regular as a line of infantry, and no less dangerous. His forehead was large: his black hair waning into grey, save that one lock which grew like the forelock of old Time, was raven still. His eyes were small, and so deep in his head, no man ever saw the whites of them : there they were, like black beads sunk in scarlet flesh. Such is the poor weak picture of the glorious living face : and then every bit of it shone, as though it had been smeared with sacrificial fat. The Hermit's voice was deep and clear ; and he had a sweet, heart-warming chuckle, which came like wine gurgling from a flask. The very pope of hermits was the Hermit of Bellyfulle.

This worthy anchorite wore no weed of grey—not he. He had a capacious gown of faded scarlet damask, worn—much worn : yet there were traces in it of past beauty ; goodly bunches of grapes, antique flagons, and Cupids flaying a buck. This robe was girdled about the waist with a thick silken rope ; a relic, as he told us, picked up in a pilgrimage. It had been a bell-rope in the best hostelry of Palestine. The nether anatomy of the recluse showed, as we thought, that all the vanity of the world had not died within him, for he wore black velvet breeches : and, moreover, seemed to throw an approving glance at his leg, cased in unwrinkled silken hose of ebon black. His feet were easily lodged in large slippers of cramoisy velvet, with here and there a glimmering of old gold lace.

A hermit would be no hermit without a skull. The anchorite of Bellyfulle was fitly provided with such tangible aid to solemn reflection : for he had the skull of a heathen Paladin, in the which—for the top had been curiously sawn off, and hinged, and a silver box contrived in the cavity—in the which the Hermit of Bellyfulle kept his best tobacco. He moreover showed his horror and contempt for heathenism by sinking the basanet of a Saracen knight into a spittoon.

The Cell of the Corkscrew revealed the magnanimity of its hermit indweller. Its walls were tapestried with sides of bacon, with hams smoked over fires of cedar and sandal-wood. Festoons of sausages hung from the roof, dazzling the eyes and melting the heart of the beholder. Frequent peering forth, with death-grim snout, a boar's head would show itself, to the ear of fancy grunting for the knife. And now, the eye would wander to a squab of flesh—a buffalo's hump—delicious to rest upon. And then there were tongues, as many as at Babel, hanging on all sides ; tongues of deer, of antelope, of Indian ox, smoked and cured by Indian cooks. Glowing and beautiful were a hundred vitreous jars of pungent pickle, disposed about the cell with the finest consideration of colour and effect. There, too, was the delicious olive, in its mild, immortal green, for Bacchus in his after-dinner hour to dally with.

It was not until the next morning that the Hermit discovered to us all the riches, the stores, the conveniences of the Cell of the Corkscrew, and its adjoining messuages. But as we have opened the matter, we will not put it off to a future page, but at once make an end of it. We found that the room wherein we supped was made sacred to knife and fork. By the way, let us inform the reader, that those instruments, of huge dimensions, surmounted the mantel-piece. The Hermit, raising his small jet eyes towards them, mildly said, with a slight chuckle, "My lares—the guardian angels of my fire-side."

An adjoining room was fitted round with shelves, on which were pots and packages of preserves and spices, and baskets of candied fruits, and here and there a case of heart-consoling Curaçoa—soft and subtle noyeau—biting absinthe; nay, all the cordials refined by the inquiring spirit of man from nature's raw materials. "What a delicious smell!" we cried. "I call it my phœnix' nest," said the Hermit, and he said no more. He then took us down into his cellar. We descended some fifty steps into a place of vast extent. "Cut by some good-natured people of the olden time," said the Hermit; "cut out of the living rock. And now, sir, the sun shines on no sort of grape that is not bottled here;" and the Hermit spoke with a voice of triumph, and gently waved the lamp in his hand to and fro, its beams falling upon a thousand and a thousand bottles, that to our excited fancy seemed to laugh like negroes in the sun.

"Simple, thoughtless man would not think it, but there is much knowledge to be taken from this cellar," said the Hermit.

"With the help of a corkscrew," said we.

"Right; with the blessing of a corkscrew," cried the Hermit. "But for a time treading on the carnal man, there is other. higher knowledge. You will observe, sir, that I have laid out my bottles geographically; from the cyder of Devonshire to the rice spirit of China. In this way, I manage to go entirely round the world once a year."

"Is it possible?" we asked, and we fear it, in a voice of incredulity; for the Hermit drew himself up, and spoke very solemnly.

"Man," said he, "a lie in any place is a poor sneaking thing; still, a lie may be better or worse by its locality. Now the man," and here the anchorite trembled with emotion, "the man who would tell a lie in a wine-cellar, is a wretch unutterable. His heart's-blood, at the best, is bad vinegar."

"It is—it is," said we, feeling the rebuke. "And this is a map of the world, done by Bacchus?"

The Hermit of Bellyfulle, smiling benevolently, gently nodded his head. "You will perceive it. Here, as I said, is the cyder, the ale of England. There, Champagne, Burgundy, Bordeaux. There, the Johannisberg. At the present time, I am in Hungary, drinking Tokay."

"It is delightful," we said, "to meet you in so favoured a place."

Leaving the cellar, the Hermit took us to his farmyard. Instantaneously we were surrounded by all sorts of poultry. We were particularly pleased with a breed of fowls, of enormous size, and of the whitest and most dazzling plumage.

"You like them?" said the Hermit, observing our look of admiration. "So do I. Were it not that I am almost dead to fleshly affections, I should say they were my passion. They are capons, sir. It is a strange weakness, but I love them dearly; especially with pork, judiciously pickled. I call them, sir," and the Hermit faintly smiled, "I call them my monks."

We next visited the fish-ponds. "Here, sir," said the Hermit, "are my trout."

"How very large!" we exclaimed, as some huge fish darted from under the weeds.

"Now, sir, though you will not venture to doubt my word, others might. I have a great moral experiment going on among these fish. They are entirely fed upon artificial flies."

"Is it possible?" we asked. "For what purpose?"

"To show the sufficiency of the imagination to the satisfaction of the belly," replied the Hermit.

"It will be a great political discovery," said we. "Have you tried the system on yourself?"

Either the Hermit did not hear us, or hearing, disdained an answer; for he walked on, we following. "My orchard," said he, pointing to a very forest of trees, loaded with the fruits of autumn.

"Are you not frequently robbed?" we asked. "Have you no spring-guns, man-traps"—

"Look," said the Hermit, and he pointed to a written board fastened to one of the trees—there were twenty such about the orchard—which board contained a notice, inviting in the prettiest and most paternal words all little boys who might pass that way, to come into the orchard, and eat their fill. They were warned upon no account to take the smallest fruit, but to carefully pick the largest, the ripest, and the best. There were likewise ladders provided that the boys might not injure the boughs, or rend their breeches by climbing. Or if they should chance to tear their garments, there was an oilskin bag hanging from a large walnut tree in the middle of the orchard, in which bag were needles and thread, to repair for the nonce any gash that might else scandalise the out-door world.

"But do not the birds plunder you?" we asked.

"My cherries, for two or three years, suffered grievously from the rooks," said the Hermit; "but they are sensible birds, sir; very sensible. I bought the cast-off coat of a Jew money-lender, and stuffing it with straw, I hung it upon the highest tree. The rooks are clever birds, sir—they never perched again."

Having shown to the reader the cell and grounds—we have purposely omitted all notices of bed-rooms, pantry, and outhouses, of the Hermit of Bellyfulle—we must bring the said reader back to the first hour of our introduction to the anchorite. Be it remembered, that we are still tired and joint-sore with our journey, and that we have only eaten three rashers, and swallowed half-a-dozen eggs.

To say nothing of the external dignity of the Hermit, it was evident to us, from one single circumstance, that he was a man of superior mind. He never uttered a syllable until we both had supped. In an afterchange of thought, the Hermit confessed that he admired his guest upon the same high principle.

"A man, sir," observed the sage, "who gabbles at his dinner, may be said to swallow, not to eat. Eating, sir, is as much a mental, nay, more so, than a physical task. There is, sir, a wonderful sympathy between the brain and the palate. Talk destroys the exquisite harmony between them. All the nobler functions of the soul should be present during every mouthful; and so sublimating it, the wise man eats with his brain, the fool with his mouth."

"You have studied these things curiously," said we.

"It was my prime object in quitting the world. I resolved, upon the death of my fourth wife, to shut myself up from the vanities of life, and write a cookery book—an encyclopædia of the kitchen."

"It is to be hoped," said we, "you have not repented of your magnanimity?"

"No, sir; no. I have been hard at work—but it is the labour of a life. I have toiled ten years, and only got to ducks."

"Ducks!"

"Ducks, sir. Ten years, and only finished four letters: but hope is strong: I have no doubt I shall live to see Z. By that time the ignorant world will begin to feel its mouth water for a sirloin of Zebra; and I am the only man who can tell the world how to cook it."

"A sirloin of zebra? Was there ever such a joint put upon a spit?"

"I have partaken, sir, of hundreds; but those feasts were in the blessed region of As-you-like."

"As-you-like! Where may that region be?" we asked.

The Hermit's eyes filled with tears, and he answered, with a broken voice, "I cannot tell—I cannot tell; though I have lived there—have children there—I know not where it is, know not how to seek it."

"How," we asked, "did you first find it out?"

"That, sir, is the strangest story of my life; though I have many, many stories in that box," and the Hermit pointed to a large cedar chest in the corner, "that may some day puzzle the printer. However, sir, all I know, you shall know. Brandy or Hollands?" asked the Hermit, pushing the bottles. "Both smuggled, upon my honour," said the sage, laying his hand upon his breast. "Do you take lemon? Here, sir, is a squeezer made of true eremite maple. Sugar; water, hot and cold. And now, sir, you shall have my story. I call it—

"The Flying Bottle.

"I have been a traveller, sir—a great traveller. It was my fortune, when about five-and-twenty, to sail to the Indian Seas. We dropped anchor close to one of the islands to be found in those blissful waters. I went ashore, and everything about me seemed new and strange, but beautiful, very beautiful. I had wandered from my party, and was alone in a field overgrown with hyacinths, when a bottle suddenly sprang up beneath my foot; and as I walked, the bottle—a black wine-bottle, no more—hopped, hopped like a bird, before me. I ran after it; but the faster I ran, the quicker it hopped. At length, mustering all my strength, I ran until I fairly ran the bottle down. Then, smelling at its mouth, for there was no cork in it, I smelt a most delicious odour; I raised the bottle to my lips, and drank. Instantly my hands seemed riveted around the vessel, and two wings sprang from the sides of the bottle. In a moment, I was raised from the earth. I tried to let go the bottle, but my hands were as a part of it; and still the bottle flew and flew like an eagle to the sun; and I swooned, and knew no more until I awoke in a region which the inhabitants told me was the kingdom of As-you-like.

"I looked about me, and I could have sworn that I was in some street in London; for in my boyhood, I had once visited that wonderful and wicked city, taken thither by my grandfather. The houses were familiar to me; the character of the people, their clothes, nay, their language, all seemed known to me; but when I said as much, the worthy folks about me smiled at my delusion ; and further, when I told them the story of the bottle, they shook their heads, and said they doubted not I should soon discover my mistake. And very soon I did so. That I should know the language of the people of As-you-like as perfectly as themselves was only a part of the mystery of the bottle. I had drunk it from its mouth.

"It was plain that I was considered a curiosity by the folks, who, indeed, looked upon me with that sort of pity and forbearance which I have known displayed by soft-hearted people towards a Hottentot. It was plain they felt that I had much in common with them all, but was nevertheless of a much lower degree of sensibility and intelligence. It is right, however, that I should confess that this opinion arose from my own coarse habits—from my education, and my manners contracted in my previous life. To me, they seemed the simplest, the most foolish of created things ; whilst, as I afterwards discovered, they at times looked upon me with so much aversion, that, had they not been the tenderest, the gentlest people in the world, they would have cast me forth to perish in the streets. But I am forgetting myself," said the Hermit—"I am falling into the common talk of the world about us : it was impossible that even a dog should perish in the streets of As-you-like.

"Before I descend to my own particular adventures in that glorious region, I will endeavour to give you some idea of its government, its religion, its laws, and the social habits of its people. Pardon me, sir," said the Hermit, wiping his eyes and emptying his glass, "but I cannot touch upon this theme without feeling my heart melt like butter in my body. Whilst I talk of As-you-like, my spirits sink ; I am heavy, to very dumpishness."

Pausing a moment, and clearing his throat, the Hermit proceeded.

"And first, sir, for the order of government. As-you-like is a monarchy ; a limited monarchy. At the time I dwelt there, the crown was worn by King Abdomen, almost the greatest man that ever walked. His natural accomplishments were many : he was held to make a more melodious sneeze than any man in the universe. He invented buttons, the people of As-you-like before his time tying their clothes about them with strings. He also invented quart goblets. He was the son of King Stubborn, known as the King of the Shortwools.

"After the king came the nobility ; that is, the men who had shown themselves better than other men, and whose virtues were worked into their titles.

"Thus there was the Duke of Lovingkindness ; the Marquis of Sensibility ; the Earl of Tenderheart ; the Baron of Hospitality, and so forth. Touching, too, was the heraldry of As-you-like. The royal arms were, charity healing a bruised lamb, with the legend, *Dieu et paix.* And then for the coach-panels of the aristocracy, I have stood by the hour, at holiday times, watching them; and tears have crept into my eyes, and my heart has softened under their delicious influence. There were no lions, griffins, panthers, lynxes — no swords or daggers — no short verbal incitements to man-quelling. Oh, no! One nobleman would have for his bearings a large wheaten loaf, with the legend—*Ask and have.* Another would have a hand bearing a purse, with the question—*Who lacks?* Another would have a truckle-bed painted on his panels, with the words—*To the tired and footsore.* Another would display some comely garment, with —*New clothes for rags.* Oh! I could go through a thousand of such bearings, all with the prettiest quaintness showing the soft, fleshly heart of the nobleman, and inviting, with all the brief simplicity of true tenderness, the hungry, the poor, the weary, and the sick, to come, feed, and be comforted. And these men were of the nobility of As-you-like; nor was there even a dog to show his democratic teeth at them.

"The church was held in deepest reverence. Happy was the man who, in his noon-day walk, should meet a bishop; for it was held by him as an omen of every manner of good fortune. This beautiful superstition arose, doubtless from the love and veneration paid by the people to the ministers of religion, who, from their tenderness, their piety, their affection towards their flocks, were looked upon as the very porters to heaven. The love of the people placed in the hands of their bishops heaps and heaps of money; but as quickly as it was heaped, was it scattered again by the ministers of the faith, who were thus perpetually preaching goodness and charity at the hearths of the poor, and the poor were every hour lifting up their hands and blessing them. It was not enough that the bishops were thus toilsome in their out-door work of good; but in the making of new laws and amending of old ones, they showed the sweetness, and, in the truest sense, the greatness, of the human spirit. During my stay in As-you-like, what we should call the House of Lords, but what in that country was called the House of Virtues, debated on what some of their lordships deemed a very pretty case to go to war upon; and, sooth to say, for a time the House of Virtues seemed to forget the active benevolence that had heretofore been its moving principle. Whereupon the bishops one by one arose, and from their lips there flowed such heavenly music, in their eyes there sparkled such apostolic tears, that all the members of the House of Virtues rose, and with one accord fell to embracing one another, and called all the world their brothers, and vowed they would talk away the misunderstanding between themselves and neighbours ; they would not shed blood, they would not go to war.

"And this was ever after called the peace of the bishops.

"The second deliberative assembly was called the House of Workers. No man could be one of these, who had not made known to the world his wisdom—his justice—his worship of truth for truth's sake. No worker was returned upon the mere chance of his fitness. He must be known as an out-door worker for the good of his fellow men, before he could be sent, an honoured member, to the House. The duty of the assembly was to make laws ; and as these were to be made for all men, it was the prime endeavour and striving of the workers to write them in the plainest words, in the briefest meaning. They would debate and work for a whole day—they always assembled with clear heads and fresh spirits every morning at nine—to enshrine their wisdom in the fewest syllables. And whereas, here with us we give our children Goody Two Shoes and Jack and the Bean Stalk, as the easiest and simplest lessons for their tender minds to fasten on, in As-you-like the little creatures read the Abridgment of the Statutes for their first book ; so clear, so lucid, so direct was it in its meaning and its purpose.

"Nevertheless, as there were some dull and giddy folk, who, after all the labour of the House of Workers, could or would not know the laws, there were certain meek and loving-kind professors called goodmen guides, answering to our attorneys, whose delight it was, for the very smallest imaginable sum, to interpret and make known the power and beauty of the statutes. And whereas, among us, physicians and surgeons—may the spirits of charity and peace consecrate their fire-sides !—set apart a portion of the day to feel the pulse of stricken poverty, to comfort and solace the maimed and wasting poor—so in As-you-like, did these goodmen guides give a part of their time to the passionate and ignorant, advising them to abstain from the feverish turmoil of law ; showing them how suspense would bake their blood and eat their hearts, and wear and weigh down man's noble spirit. And thus, these goodmen guides would, I may say, with a silken string, lead men back to content and neighbourly adjustment. When men could pay for such counsel, they paid a moderate cost ; when they were poor, they were advised, as by the free benevolence of the mediator.

"The people of As-you-like had, a thousand years or so before, waged war with other nations. There could be no doubt of it, for the cannon still remained. I saw what at one time had been the arsenal. There were several pieces of artillery; the swallows had built their nests under their very mouths. As I will not disguise anything, I own there were a few persons who, when a war was talked of, the war so happily prevented by the bishops, strutted and looked big, and with swollen cheeks gabbled about glory. But they were smiled at for their simplicity; advised, corrected by the dominant reason of the country, and, after a time, confessed themselves to be very much ashamed of their past folly.

"Perhaps the manner in which the As-you-likeans transacted business was strange; it may appear incredible. I was never more surprised than when I first overheard two men dealing for a horse. One was a seller of horses, the other seemed a comfortable yeoman. 'That is a pretty nag of yours,' said the yeoman. 'Pretty enough outside,' said the horse-dealer. 'I will give you ten lumps for it,' said the farmer (the *lump* signifying our pound). 'No, you shall not,' answered the horse-dealer; 'for the nag shys, and stumbles, and is touched a little in the wind. Nevertheless, the thing is worth four lumps.'—'You have said it?' cried the yeoman. 'I have said it,' answered the horse-dealer. Understand, that this is the only form of oath—if I may so call it—in As-you-like. 'You have said it?' 'I have said it.' Such is the most solemn protestation among all people, from the king to the herdsman.

"The shops in As-you-like are very beautiful. All the goods are labelled at a certain price. You want, let us say, a pair of stockings. You enter the shop. The common salutation is 'Peace under this roof'—and the shopkeeper answers—'Peace at your home.' You look at the stockings, and laying down the money, take the goods and depart. The tradesman never bends his back in thankfulness until his nose touches the counter; he is in no spasm of politeness; not he; you would think him the buyer and not the seller. I remember being particularly astonished at what I thought the ill manners of a tradesman, to whom I told my astonishment. 'What, friend,' he said, 'should I do? My neighbour wants a fire-shovel—I sell a fire-shovel. If I ought to fling so many thanks at him for buying the fire-shovel, should he not first thank me for being here with fire-shovels to sell? Politeness, friend—as you call it—may be very well; but I should somehow suspect the wholesale dealer in it. Where I should carry away so much politeness, I should fear I had short weight.' A strange people, you must own, these As-you-likeans.

"Taxation was light, for there was no man idle in As-you-like. Indeed, there was but one tax: it was called the truth-tax, and for this reason. Every man gave in an account of his wealth and goods, and paid in proportion to his substance. There had been other taxes, but all these were merged into this one tax, by a solemn determination of the House of Virtues. 'Since Providence has given to us the greatest measure of its gifts, it has thereby made us the chancellors to poorer men.' Upon this avowed principle, the one tax was made. 'Would it not be the trick of roguery to do otherwise?' they said. 'Should we not blush to see the ploughman sweating at his task, knowing that, squared by his means, he paid more than we? Should we not feel the robbers of the man—not the Virtues banded together to protect him?' And thus, there was but one tax. In former ages there had been many; for I was shown in the national museum of As-you-like, several mummies, dry and coloured like saddle-leather, that in past centuries had been living custom-house officers and excisemen.

"There were prisons in As-you-like, in which the idle and the vicious were made to work, and taught the wickedness, the very folly of guilt. As the state, however, with paternal love, watched, I may say it, at the very cradles of the poor,—teaching the pauper, as he grew, a self-responsibility; showing to him right and wrong, not permitting him to grow up with, at best, an odd, vague notion, a mere guess at black and white,—there were few criminals. The state did not expose its babies—for the poor are its children—to hang them when men.

"So dear were the wants of the poor to the rulers of As-you-like, that, on one occasion, in a year of scarcity, the monarch sold all his horses—the beautiful cattle went at 70,000 *lumps*—and laid out the money in building school-rooms and finding teachers for pauper babies.

"And the state, believing man to be something more than a thing of digestion, was always surrounding the people with objects of loveliness, so that a sense of the beautiful might be with them even as the colour of their blood, and thus might soften and elevate the spirit of man, and teach him true gentleness out of his very admiration of the works of his fellow. Hence, the museums and picture-galleries, and abbeys and churches, were all thrown open to the people, who always seemed refined, subdued by the emanations of loveliness around them.

"There were very many rich people in As-you-like, but I never knew them to be thought a bit the better off for their money. They were thought fortunate—no more. They were looked upon as men, who having put into a lottery, had had the luck to draw a prize. As for the poor, they were always treated with a softness of manner that surprised me. The poor man in As-you-like seemed privileged by his poverty. He seemed to have a stronger claim to the sympathies of those in worldly substance over him. Had a rich man talked brutally, or domineered over, or ill-used a pauper in As-you-like, he would have been looked upon as we look upon a man who beats a woman. There was thought to be a moral cowardice in the act that made its doer despicable. Hence, it was as common in As-you-like to see the rich man first touch his hat to the poor, as with us for the pauper to make preliminary homage to wealth. Then, in As-you-like, no man cared to disguise the smallness of his means. To call a man a pauper was no more than with us to say his eyes are grey or hazel. And though there were poor men, there was no famishing creature, no God's image, sitting with his bony, idle hands before him, like a maniac in a cage — brutalised, maddened, by the world's selfishness.

"For ten years I lived in As-you-like. Ten happy years. I married, became a father, and"—

"And what,"—we asked of the Hermit,—"what made you leave so blessed a spot?"

"I was one day in my garden, strolling about, whilst they were laying dinner. I paused to look at my melon-bed, when out hopped the black bottle. Without a thought I ran after it—woe is me that I did so!—and caught it in my grasp. I felt the bottle mount; I became instantly dizzy, and I know not what passed, but when I came to myself, I was lying on a truss of straw in an English farm-yard."

"A most extraordinary adventure," said we.

"Yes, I've seen a few things in my time," said the Hermit; "but they must remain for future talk between us."

Worn with our last night's journey, and beguiled into the sweet sin of late hours by the curious liquor and alike curious discourse of the Hermit of Bellyfulle, it was not until the clock struck nine that we became conscious of our new resting-place. A bright day shone upon us reproachfully through the casement; flowers shook their heads impatiently at the panes; cocks without crowed, as we thought, in angry note, at their master's guest, and the clock—a pretty piece of Venice work upon the mantel-piece—ticked remonstrance. With a jump, we leapt from goose feathers to the floor.

We flung open the casement, and the sweet, fresh, nimble air came, like God's blessing, into the chamber. Sinking in an easy chair, with a stocking in our right hand, we made stern questioning of our memory. It was all true—true as adamant. We were the guest of the bounteous Hermit of Bellyfulie ; we sat, at that time beneath the roof-tree of the Cell of the Corkscrew.

How, indeed, could we question the sweet reality? All things about us revealed the taste, the mellow heart, of the anchorite householder. The chamber was small—the bed a primitive truckle ; but there was an Indian carpet, soft as lamb's-wool, on the floor ; there were books, not many, on a shelf; and the black oak wainscot was carved with fruit and knots of flowers, with here a flask and there a flagon. Above the mantel-piece was this sentence, in letters of ruddy gold :—

Happy is the man who may tell all his dreams.

In a compartment of the wainscot, over the head of the bed, was also written:—

Make your bed as a coffin,
and your coffin will be as a bed.

As we pondered on the philosophy of these lines, we looked dreamily about us, and for the first time saw in a corner of the chamber a little door. Above it was carved a small delicate hand and arm in the action of beckoning, with what seemed to us a string of pearls about the wrist. Throwing down our stocking, we opened the door, and heard distinctly the sound of running water. We descended two or three low steps, and following our ear, went through a narrow, winding, sloping, passage, cut, as it seemed, out of rock, the floor covered with rushes and moss. In half a minute we stood beside a brilliant fountain, tumbling and glittering in a large natural basin—a hollow of the rock. The sky was sapphire blue, and flowers, carefully tended, grew around the edge of the spring ; and there, too, was short greensward, tender to the feet. Towels, dried on beds of thyme, were spread on a sort of garden-seat, with slippers, dressing-gown, and other covering. We at once apprehended the meaning of the beckoning hand, and with short preparation plunged into the spring.

In due season we returned to our chamber. Touching was the care of our host! A small tankard of hot spiced wine stood upon the table, filling the room with aromatic sweetness. Was not this the very heart of hospitality? As we hastily prepared ourselves to meet the eremite, we heard voices ; and, as we thought, the sweet, low voice of woman. Could it be the Hermit's wife? He had said nothing of so blissful an appendage to Corkscrew Cell ; nevertheless, it might be. We quickened our speed ; for, thought we, Madam the Hermitess may be waiting breakfast.

We hastened to what we will call the refectory. The Hermit was seated in his chair; the breakfast—it would have put a stomach into a mummy—was laid out, widely and bounteously. As we entered, the Hermit raised his face, scarlet with eating, from a platter; and his little black eyes twinkling welcome, he nodded, and gasped from his full mouth—"*Salve!* Sit and eat."

One hour at least had run to the past, ere another word was spoken. "That brawn, sir, was cured in Paradise," were the next words uttered, as the Hermit pushed away his platter, and fell like a pillow in his chair. "The hog, sir, is a wonderful philosopher."

"Philosopher!" we cried, for the moment inattentive to the truth delivered.

"Philosopher! We call him filthy, ugly names; brand him as a foul and doltish thing. It is like the hurried ignorance of men. I look upon the pig, sir, as the philosopher of brutes—yea, the Diogenes of four-legged creatures. Consider, sir. Contemplate the doings of a hog. See him, sir, with his frank stupidity; or what, to skin-deep thinkers, seemeth stupidity. Mark him wallowing in gutter-mud; see him in the haunts of men, even where fever comes, sometimes, alas! as kindest handmaid to poverty. See him, with his broad, quivering snout snuffing at the thresholds of very beggars. With what gust will he munch a cabbage-stalk! With what a grunt of gratitude will he take unto himself the leavings of the veriest poor! There is nought that tooth can pierce, that goodman hog will turn aside from. He will get fat and flavour from a dunghill; nay, in hopeful discovery, shove his snout into a cinder heap. These are bad habits; nasty, foul, degrading practices. And yet, sir, what comes of them? Why, this, sir—this;" and the Hermit struck the flat of his knife on a huge wedge of brawn. "Your philosopher considers, and takes experience of man; and only as he is curious in all the doings, from noblest to basest of the animal, is he, the said philosopher, worthy of his gown. He elaborates and refines his experience, gathered from highway and alley, and hovel, and cellar; and then out of the very juices of this digested wisdom, he leaves an oral system, or a written scroll. Now, sir, what the brawn is to the hog, is Plato's book to Plato; a sweet and unctuous lump, drawn and rarefied, and elaborated, from even the foulest doings of the world for the world's better wisdom. When my lady sees Master Pig munching and wallowing in a ditch, she curls her nose and lifts her shoulders at his nastiness. And lo! when the same pig's leg, fragrant with sage and patriarchal onion, smokes upon the board,—the same lady sendeth her plate three times. It is even so with philosophers, and the true men of the world. They have lived and died despised in alleys; and afterwards are fed upon in tapestried chambers. I never look upon a hog, even in his foulest plight, but I consider him tenderly, affectionately, as the living, pauper laboratory from which in good season men may carve most melting sweets. It is in this spirit, I—as I take it—judiciously class philosopher and pig."

"True," said we; "there may be affinity." Then resolving to know if it was the voice of woman we had heard, we returned to the swine-flesh and the lady glanced at by our host. "Your figure of the lady and the pig's leg," said we, "reminds us of a question we had to ask. Pardon us, if we are bold; but heard we not, ere we entered, the small, musical pipe of the other sex?"

"My laundress, sir," answered the Hermit; "she lives in Clovernook. In the wicked, noisy, topsy-turvy world you come from, she was a lady in her own right, with broad acres and sacks of gold."

"And now a laundress," cried we. "How came such change about? What cruelty of fortune?"

"A touch of conscience—a sweet touch, sir. The Countess, it was her belief, had killed two milliners."

"Killed them!" we cried.

"Not a statutable, Tyburn-killing," answered the Hermit; "not what would be called killing by twelve men bolted in a box; but what, sir, a jury of angels may look very grave at, and more, return a most uncomfortable verdict upon."

"Pray, sir, explain the case," we said.

"Phoo! the story's as short as short cake," said the Hermit. "Her ladyship would take no answer: it was a birth-day, or a court-day, or a gad-about of some sort; and her ladyship, at a short notice, was to be very fine indeed. There were three girls, milliners, all sick and wasted at the time, with fading eyes, hectic faces, and deep coughs—death, sir, croaking and wheezing in their throats. The last work two of the girls did was for Lady Swandown. She went to the show, whatever it was, with almost the last sigh of the girls in her fine dress. The two girls died, and her ladyship—she is yet a fine woman, sir, in the rich fulness of some forty-five—forswore the drawing-room world, and coming here to Clovernook, brought the surviving sister with her."

"Is it possible?" we asked.

"You shall see the Countess Swandown; though in Clovernook she is simply called Dame Diaper. Ha! it is a pretty sight to see her tending Mabel, as we call her here, the last of the sister milliners: to see the Countess petting and nursing her, and walking with her down the green lanes; and when the poor thing is too weak to walk, it is indeed pleasant to see the Countess drawing the sick milliner in a little, light, easy sort of a coach."

"A sight indeed!" we cried.

"Yes," said the Hermit, with a grave look; "when we think of the poor things already killed, and the creature yet suffering, it is a sight, I think, to please the very cherubs. You shall see them both, sir; both Dame Diaper and Mabel."

"But you said the Countess—that is, the Dame—was laundress here?"

"I should say, a sort of lady-laundress; a clear-starcher. She has taken the work by way of penance; and bringing all her genius to bear upon it, has elevated a mere knack into fine art, sir. My cravats and ruffles are very pictures. You heard us talking? Ay, sir, the old story—the old grievance, sir, 'twixt man and woman," said the Hermit.

"And what is that, sir?" we asked.

The Hermit, shaking his head and groaning, cried—"Buttons."

"Buttons!" said we.

The Hermit drew himself closer to the table, and spreading his arms upon it, leaned forward with the serious air of a man prepared to discuss a grave thing. "Buttons," he repeated. Then clearing his throat, he began: "In the course of your long, and, as I hope, well-spent life, has it never come with thunderbolt conviction upon you, that all washerwomen, clear-starchers, getters-up of fine linen, or under whatever name Eve's daughters,—for as Eve brought upon us the stern necessity of a shirt, it is but just that her girls should wash it,—under whatever name they cleanse and beautify flax and cotton, that they are all under some compact, implied or solemnly entered upon amongst themselves and their non-washing, non-starching, non-getting-up sisterhood, that by means subtle, and almost mortally certain, they shall worry, coax, or drive all bachelors and widowers soever into the pound of irredeemable wedlock? Has this tremendous truth, sir, never struck you?"

"How—by what means?" we asked.

"Simply, by buttons," answered the Hermit, bringing down his clenched fist upon the table.

We knew it—we looked incredulous.

"See here, sir," said the Hermit, leaning still further across the table. "I will take a man, who, on his outstart in life, set his hat acock at matrimony—a man who defies Hymen and all his wicked wiles. Nevertheless, sir, the man must wear a shirt;

the man must have a washerwoman. Think you, that that shirt, returning from the tub, never wants one—two—three buttons? Always, sir—always. Sir, though I am now an anchorite, I have lived in your bustling world, and seen, ay, quite as much as any one of its manifold wickedness. Well, the man—the buttonless man—at first calmly remonstrates with his laundress. He pathetically wrings his wrists at her, and shows his condition. The woman turns upon him her wainscot face, and promises amendment. The thing shall never happen again. The week revolves. Think you, the next shirt has its just and lawful number of buttons? Devil a bit!"

Starting at the word, we looked, we fear, reproachfully in the Hermit's face.

"Pardon me; let it be as it had never been said," cried the anchorite—a deeper tint dawning in his face, and his eye looking suddenly moist. "Pardon me, but the heart has strange chords; even buttons may sometimes shatter them."

We bowed, and begged the Hermit to proceed.

"Well, sir," said our host, after an effort, "week after week the poor man wrangles with his washerwoman: from the very gentleness of even maidenly complaint, the remonstrance rises to a hurricane of abuse; and still the washerwoman, as it would seem bound by her oath to her unmarried sisterhood, brings home no shirt complete in all its buttons. Man—the fiercest of his kind—cannot always rage. He becomes tired—ashamed of clamour. He sighs, and bears his buttonless fate. His thoughts take a new turn. In his melancholy, his heart opens; he is softened—subdued; and in this, his hour of weakness, a voice—a demon voice—whispers to him, 'Fond, foolish man! why trust thy buttons to an alien? Why helplessly depend upon the needle and thread of one who loves not thee, but thy shilling? Take a wife; have a woman of thine own, who shall care for thy buttons!' The tempter is strong. The man smiles distrustfully, but still he smiles. That very night—it so happens—he goes to a house-warming. He is partner at cards with Miss Kitty. She never did look so toothsome. And then her voice—'twould coax a nail out of heart of oak. The man thinks of his buttons; and before he leaves the house, Kitty has been brought to confess that she doesn't know what she *may* do—she may marry, or she may not."

"Is it possible?" we cried, with a laugh.

"Sir," said the Hermit, "'tis not a thing to idly laugh at. Take fifty matches, and be assured of it, if you sift 'em well, out of forty, at least, you'll find buttons in some shape at the bottom of 'em."

"It may be," we said.

"It is," cried the Hermit with emotion. "Asses are led by their noses; men by their buttons."

There was a dead pause. The Hermit had us in a clinch. We felt ourselves beaten, and therefore flung our discourse once more upon swine's flesh. "It is delicious brawn," we cried. "Blessings have fallen upon the man who reared it."

"Perhaps," said the Hermit, with a faint smile, "the fellow knew well how to feed hogs. Understand me; I am no unbeliever in the efficacy of blessings: potent are they, sweetly potent where they fall. Yet, sir, like all goodness, they are sometimes terribly libelled in the world. I have known men by the very lithesomeness of their backs, and bronze of their faces, get fat and golden. Well, sir, to what have they sworn they owed all their grease and prosperous yellowness; forsooth, to the blessings that fell upon them—blessings rewardful of their piety. These men, sir, I know it, have in a business way picked pockets, yet have they declared they owed their substance to the untiring fingers of their saints."

"Very like," said we.

"Sir, it *is*," said the Hermit; "and the brawn before us brings to my memory a little story that may shadow forth this truth. I have noted down the tale, and 'tis there—in that cedar chest, as I have said, with a hundred others. Do not stir; I think I can remember the little history, without rummaging the papers. I call it—

A Short Story of a Cow and a Sow.

"You were never at Naples, sir?—No? Well, I will not commiserate you; I will not triumph; I will spare your feelings. Naples! If, sir, there be a place where a man may forget taxes and all the tribulation of what with great gravity we call civilised life, it is—always excepting my own Clovernook—it is Naples.

"Saint Anthony is a great fellow at Naples: a saint, sir, of the first water. Perhaps, I am wrong in the epithet: water being rarely a test of saints; monks, who are to saints what porwiggles are to frogs, for the most part abominating that pauper fluid. No matter. Saint Anthony is a great gun at Naples, whatever he may be elsewhere: for saints, like fox-hunting lords of the manor, though they may make a terrible clatter in their own neighbourhood, are sometimes held dirt cheap in other places. Well, sir, Saint Anthony in his mortal days had a kindly yearning, a love, a gentleness, a pity towards everything that lived; beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles. What Atticus was to

Cicero, Saint Anthony's pig was to Saint Anthony. Great was his power over animals; most melodious, most convincing his speech; as was proved by his sermon to the fishes, which touched them all alike, the hard roes and the soft. Saint Anthony died—but to this day Saint Anthony lives in Naples. Once a year, with reverent care, people bring to him their various four-footed chattels; yea, the two-legged birds, to boot, that they may be soused with water blessed at the shrine of Saint Anthony; the said water being fatal to measles, mange, glanders, pip, and every other malady that walks or flies. Do you laugh, sir? I am sorry for it. Call it superstition if you will; superstition hath uglier blotches than this. There is, to my mind, a fine spirit of humanity in this custom; nay, a beautiful piece of natural religion. Men, who acknowledge its sanctity, thereby acknowledge in the very hog that grunts about them, a something cared for by the Divine Schemer of things: it is a creature, part and parcel of the wondrous whole; a thing to be used tenderly by men, seeing it is not despised by a saint. The water of Saint Anthony, thus sprinkled and falling upon brutes, must cool the pride of human-kind, showing, that although it is the highest piece of heaven's work on this earth, it is not the sole piece. And thus, the peasant taught by the love and benevolence of Saint Anthony towards his horse, is taught a tenderness for the creature which otherwise he had not known. He, Pietro, has his saint to guard and bless him, but—to Pietro's mind—so have Pietro's cows and sheep: and so, the saintly care about all brings all into a narrower circle.

"Therefore, at Naples, great is Saint Anthony. Fine ladies send their lap-dogs to be sprinkled, and they yelp back with blessings about them. Parrots are soused, and lo! they scream defiance at the pip; and if limited before in their vocabulary, have full soon in their throats a very dictionary.

"Gano was a Neapolitan farmer; a heavy, stupid, yet withal, a most religious man. Not an animal that called him master, that was not sprinkled, once a year, with the water of Saint Anthony: and thereupon, the ewes yeaned twins, the hens never failed of eggs, and multiplication was ever triumphant in his dove-cote! Though Gano could not drive all his stock to the shrine of Saint Anthony, he never failed once a year to purchase of the priest a sufficiency of water, wherewith to sprinkle his property at home: and all things throve with him accordingly.

"Gano had bought a young sow; a spare thing,—but, with the blessing of Saint Anthony and plenty to eat, the sow, it was the belief of Gano, would plump and fatten. Gano failed not to drive the sow to Saint Anthony's water, where, at Gano's special intercession, it was doubly sluiced. Gano drove the sow home; and thoughts of ham and bacon, and savoury sausage, sang sweetly in his brain as he meditated upon the blessings of Saint Anthony. Weeks passed away, and nevertheless the sow did not fatten; no, it somewhat pined and shrunk. There was some devil in the pig! So, at least, thought Gano.

"A short while after, Gano bought a cow. Had she been sprinkled by Saint Anthony? No. It was almost no matter; she was so fine a cow, without aspersion. Her black skin was like Genoa velvet; and then so sweet, so gracious a look about the head! More than all, every day she gave a flood of milk. Leagues about there was talk of Gano's cow.

"As it sometimes happens with men, so did it happen with Gano's cow. Just as her fame had spread around, and brought many folks to see her, her merits became less: she began to shrink; and for milk, less and less was drawn from her night and morning. It was well for the faith of Gano that it was so: for looking, as in his infidel moments he had looked, upon the sleek carcase of the cow, the animal unblessed, unsprinkled by Saint Anthony, and comparing it with the spare condition of the sow that had been washed almost from snout to tail by the efficacious water, Gano—the saints forgive him!—began to consider within himself, whether, after all, Saint Anthony was so indispensable to the health of a farm-yard. Weak, wicked Gano!

"Still the cow dwindled, and as it dwindled, still—it was strange, or rather it was by no means strange—still the sow increased. The cause was plain. The blessings of Saint Anthony were working in the marrow of the swine; the saint was covering its bones with flesh; and in a short time, the wonder and admiration before bestowed upon the cow—were offered to the pig. It was prophesied by some that the cow would die; but it was no matter: the added value of the sow would more than make good the loss; it was so wonderful in its fat—so beautiful, yet mighty in its proportions. Still the sow fattened, and still the cow gave no milk.

"'See you not,' said old, pious neighbours to Gano—'see you not the blessings of good Saint Anthony? How have they descended upon the swine! whilst for that unblessed, misbegotten cow—cut her throat, burn, consume her; otherwise she will bring a curse upon your cattle, and blight upon your crops.' Gano felt the rebuke; acknowledged the evil dwelling in the cow, the goodness fattening in the swine. If the cow should die, it would be a just punishment on her presumptuous owner.

"Matters went on, and even the fame of Saint Anthony increased with the fat of the sow. Never had the saint's water been so highly prized. At length, the true cause of the sow's fatness was discovered ; and thus it was.

"Very early one morning, Gano rose, and going to where the cow was stalled, saw the sow lying on its fat belly beneath the cow, with the teat in its mouth, milking, milking with all its might, and grunting complacently at the larceny !

"Gano, though astounded, and on the instant suspicious of the truth, said nothing to his neighbours. It might have been the first time that the sow had so behaved itself. He would wait and watch. He did so : and six mornings, at the same hour, he saw the sow in the same place, milking, milking, and grunting the while ! Almost every ounce of swine's fat was due to the cow. The neighbours had sworn that the sow had prospered by the peculiar blessings of Saint Anthony. Alas ! the sow had flourished upon stolen milk.

"Now, sir," said the Hermit, "is there no lesson in this little story ? Teaches it nothing ?"

"We think we apprehend its drift," was our answer.

"Sir, in your world—for in Clovernook we know no such animals—many are the fat swine, and only fat at the expense of poor, defrauded cattle."

"It may be," we replied.

"May be, sir ? Ha ! I know it is," said the Hermit ; "and of all sorts of fatness, that is the vilest, the coarsest, which owes its grossness to hypocrisy. You shall see a man rich in pocket and poor in soul. He goes to his church, and owns himself, to his passing condescension by the way, a miserable sinner ; he returns homeward, and proves himself to be so, albeit the proof never strikes him, by spurning the Sabbath-beggar at his threshold. This man was never known to do a large goodness. Neither was any positive, legal wickedness proved against him. No : he never grumbles at the church rates, for once a week he is decorously placed in his comfortable pew. He pays his way, and can show stamped receipts as vouchers for the good-will he bears towards all men. He is a Christian ; for one of his godfathers now alive can testify to his baptism ; nay, he has the register among other precious family documents. Hence, if he be wealthy, why, riches have descended upon him as the bounty rewarding his virtues. His own goodness has been turned into a benison. And he has oppressed no one ? He has wronged no one ? He has not armed himself with an unjust, though an allowed usage to add to his hoards—to increase his wealth ? Alas, sir, alas !" cried the Hermit, "against how many such men may the accusing spirit some day thunder forth, 'Stolen milk !'"

We were about to venture some rejoinder when the door was gently opened, and a negro child, as he appeared, about ten years old, glided in, and made up to the Hermit, presenting to him a velvet cap, and a staff of the whitest ivory.

"My little boy, sir," said the Hermit; and the child gently nodded to us, as pleased with the words of his master. "This is my hour for a walk: will you use your legs? Or, if it please you better, will you stay and read? Bezoar will show you my book-room." We at once preferred to accompany our host. "Farewell, child; and let me hear good words of you," said the Hermit, tenderly laying his hand upon the little woolly head. Saying this, the Hermit donned his cap, grasped his ivory staff, and courteously showed us from the cell. Our curiosity was immediately aroused by the little negro. Our host observed this in our looks, and said—"Yes; a fine little boy, and from a curious place too. You shall hear something of him as we walk. This way, by your leave: it is a solitary by-road, and winds to the top of yonder hill; whence you may look down upon Clovernook, lying lamb-like and quiet at the bottom." Saying this, the Hermit turned to the left from his orchard, a large sheep-dog bounding after him, and leaping about him, and barking loudest gladness. "Gently, Colin, gently," said the Hermit; and the dog thrust his nose into his master's hand, and taking a deep snuff, was on the instant quiet, and falling behind, walked gravely as a court follower.

"And the little black boy's name is Bezoar?" said we, urging the promised story.

"Bezoar," answered the Hermit; who, after a pause, continued. "He is older than his looks; and his brain is still the oldest part about him. He comes from a curious place, unknown I believe to any traveller, but myself. Do you know much of geography sir?"

We answered, and, we fear, without a blush, "Nothing."

"Your ignorance will spare me some description. Let it suffice to you, that the birthplace of Bezoar is an unknown tract—unknown to all but myself—somewhere in Japan. At one time of my life, I drove a large trade in Dutch dolls. I travelled to Japan with my merchandise, and making my way to the Emperor's court, became an especial favourite by means of my ware. The poor people had never before beheld a doll: and as my dolls were the first sort fashioned to open and shut their eyes, and emit certain sounds from the mouth—the invention has, I have heard, been shamelessly copied in France—they were considered in that strange, uncivilised country, as things of almost greater worth than mere men and women; henceforth, they who would prosper in the sight of the Emperor, became as nearly as was allowed to them, like unto dolls. The greater the doll, the finer the courtier. I soon disposed of all my goods, which being limited in supply, carried any price. I really believe, so great was the passion, that some wives would have parted with their husbands for dolls; and am almost convinced that husbands might have been found who would have changed their living, ogling, talking spouses, for mere machines of painted wood that only opened their eyes, and sounded a few sounds, when the wires were pulled for such purpose. I became a great favourite with the Emperor; and protected and authorised by his letter—it was embroidered in letters of gold on violet-coloured satin—roamed everywhere."

"But what we want"—

The Hermit stopped dead at the unseemly interruption. With a sweet smile on his face, he shook his head, and leaning on his staff, looked in our eyes. "Once upon a time, do you know what Patience wanted?" asked he of Bellyfulle.

We confessed our ignorance.

"She wanted a nightingale. Well, sir, Patience waited, and the egg sang."

We bowed to the soft rebuke, and promised to hold our peace. The Hermit continued.

"As I said, I roamed where I would. In my wanderings, I fell among a strange sort of people; strange in this way. Though the people were divided into an equal number of white and black, there was no pride of colour in the fair, no humiliation in the sooty. All were alike."

"And how was this compassed?" we asked, unable to suppress the question.

"There ran a legend in the country that it had not always been so, but that the blessing—for so the people called it—had been brought about by one of their demi-gods as I could understand, a sort of Japanese Prometheus. The blacks—people will tell you there are no blacks in Japan; you have my full authority to contradict them—had been hardly used: stripped, mutilated, sold, made merchandise of, as in other places black flesh has been, and is. The land was cursed with the wickedness: on one side there was stony-hearted arrogance; on the other, agony, debasement. Well, the Japanese God changed this; and how? One morning—a time answering to our 1st of May—all who had gone to bed as negroes, rose as white men; and the white got up blacks. For a whole twelvemonth, sir," said the Hermit of Bellyfulle, "I was myself a black man."

"Impossible!" we cried; but a glance from the Hermit subdued us into a look of belief.

"A black man," repeated the anchorite, gently striking his ivory staff upon the ground; "and, the year past, I became of my first colour. And this, sir, is the case with all the dwellers in that country. Each party takes the colour of each for one twelvemonth. One year black, one white."

"When the change was first ordered," said we, "it must have astounded the better people."

"It was a fine lesson, sir; a fine practical teaching of humility. And after all, what is it at this moment going on in that very remote province of Japan, what is it more than you figure to yourselves in the world you come from? The Japanese divinity did but anticipate the work of the future. Men, I mean Christian men, do not imagine to themselves angels of different coloured skins: they do not conceive the notion of black cherubim. Grave-dust, that truest fullers'-earth, surely takes out the negro stain. I take it, sir,"—and the Hermit paused in his walk, and closing his hands, let his staff fall in his arms,—"I take it, sir, we all rise alike?"

We said nothing; and for a few minutes the Hermit, resuming his pace, was silent. He then observed, and we thought in a somewhat pensive tone, "The pretty boy at the cell—yes, sir, I call him pretty—was a native of the strange land I have spoken of. I have seen that jetty boy white as the whitest English maiden. He was an orphan when I brought him away!"

"And at that time in his year of black?" we ventured to ask.

"Yes, sir," answered the Hermit; not observing, or not condescending to observe, a tone of levity that, struggle as we would, broke from us: for sooth to say, we thought the Hermit—as doubtless the reader will think—either pleasantly jesting or pleasantly mad. "Yes, sir," said the sage of Bellyfulle, "he was then black. He has never changed since."

"We can well believe it," was our avowal.

"It was my hope—otherwise I had never brought the dear child from his delightful land—the paradise of the world, sir! every single grape there is big as a walnut: it was my hope, had the change from black to white gone on, that the world might have been instructed. As it is, sir, were I simply to publish the truth, 'twould be taken as a traveller's story."

"Just so," said we. "For there are some distant truths that, however beautiful, will not bear a voyage. You may carry ice to the Indies, if you carefully stow it; but travellers, sir, sometimes find their best of truths melt by the way."

As we came to a turning of the path, we met one of the villagers of Clovernook; as I afterwards found, an old man, who, in the outside world, had been a planter, and the owner of a thousand slaves. He had left nearly all his wealth behind him, and by the greatest luck had escaped to the village; there, in its sweet serenity, to peep into the holes and corners of his soul, and blow the worldly dust out of them, as the housewife blows and dusts her best china. And, indeed, such care had been most necessary. He was, as the Hermit afterwards told me, a sharp-faced, wan, edgy kind of man when he set out for Clovernook, with a restless anxiety of eye, and quick, whistling kind of speech. When we saw him, there was a look of gentleness, in his old face, and his eye shone deeply, yet tranquilly, and he spoke with a sweet cheerful gravity—the natural tone of good old age.

"A good day and many," said the Hermit to the old man. "You will find your scholar at the Cell, Master Simon." And the old man, smiling, and gently bowing, without a word, passed on.

"What scholar do you speak of, may we ask?" said we.

"Bezoar, the black boy," answered the Hermit. "Master Simon teaches him chess."

"Chess! a planter, and an owner of a thousand negroes, teach a black boy chess!" we cried.

"'Tis a pretty game," said the Hermit, not attending to the contrast we had ventured,—"a pretty game; and serves to remind us, here in Clovernook, that there are such things as kings and queens, and blazoned braying state. That there are—or have been knights, sworn to do manly service, and alack! too often forgetting the vow. That there are—yes, still are—castles, strongholds of wrong—prison fastnesses for feeble innocence. That there still exist—we know them not in Clovernook—worthy, pious bishops, pulpy and rich as pine-apples. Kings, queens, knights, bishops, and castles!" cried the Hermit. "How few the syllables! Yet in this world what an uproar have they made! How much wickedness and suffering, and violence, and stone-blind bigotry—if we read the history of this dear old mother earth—Gracious Heavens!" cried the Hermit lifting his hand, "what daily Neroes are we to her! What multiplied, and still multiplying evils may all be written down in five small words! Kings, queens, knights, bishops, castles! What a significant short-hand is here, my master," said the Hermit, and he shook his head, and stalked freshly onward.

We followed him in silence along the path that, with gentle acclivity, wound around the hill. Beautiful was the way! Myrtles, geraniums, and a thousand odoriferous shrubs blossomed and breathed about us. No dead leaf was seen; no withered twig deformed the place; no slug, no snail, crawled in the path. Barefooted Venus might have trod the grass, it was so soft, so clean, so delicate. Seats, and banks, and mossy green alcoves were formed at various distances, along the way; places of rest and shelter from the sun and shower. "Here," said the Hermit, pausing—"here is the Grotto of the Cup and Cake;" he then turned aside, and entering what seemed to us the mouth of a cavern, bade us follow. We obeyed, and in a few moments stood in a circular grotto, into which the light through various crannies, cunningly fashioned, found its way; falling upon a myriad of shells of rainbow tints, that flashed and glowed about us, burning in the air. We heard the creeping of a spring, and guided by the sound, saw it falling in a thousand silver threads from a corner of the roof. An old man, clothed in white linen, received us. We shall never forget the benignity of his aspect. He was above the middle height; his face was pale as moonshine; his eyes of a bright grey, and his hair and beard were white as thistle-down. "Here is a man," thought we, "whose life has been a long task of holiness." He approached us, with a large shell-goblet in one hand, and a small basket of cakes in the other. "Drink," said the Hermit, handing us the vessel.

"Is it water?" cried we.

"Almost: mere noontide tipple," answered the Sage of Bellyfulle. "I call it the Etcetera Cordial. Harmless as mouse's milk, sir. A nun might see the bottom of the cup, yet see no worse for't. We are now at half-way distance from the summit of the hill. Here every villager halts, and takes the cup and cake. Then, with strengthened hams, plods onward. Some cakes?" and the Hermit presented the basket. "They are made by a French Duchess; a dweller in the village below. She bought the secret at, I cannot say what price, from a cardinal, her confessor.

"Have the cakes any name?" we asked.

With a slight movement of the left eyelid, the Hermit answered —"Maids'-lips."

We drank and ate, then followed the Hermit from the Grotto of the Cup. "And who may be our host?" we asked. "Some man of lifelong piety and worth, no doubt?"

"In the outside world," said the Hermit; "for 'tis thus we ever speak of the cannibal country you come from; he kept a gin-shop, in close propinquity to the Old Bailey. In his time he has been thrice fined by the excise for having, accidentally no doubt, certain compounds in his house, to give, as the wickedness of mankind imputed, an unlawful vivacity to his liquors. That man has seen much of the world, and from an eminence not enjoyed by all men."

"What eminence?" we asked.

"The pillory," answered the Hermit. "For one hour did he twirl before the faces of a mocking, egg-flinging generation; and at length descended from his altitude a changed man."

"No doubt," said we.

"He was set up a false-swearing publican, and came down a philosopher. In one hour did he see the vanity, the folly, the wicked violence of the world. In the midst of men he was apart from them: his moral feelings drew themselves inward like the horns of snails. Whilst twirling round like a pig at the spit, with abominable odours at his nostrils, and the hubbub of vulgar malice in his ears, the poor man's soul retreated into itself, and shutting his eyes upon the mob about him—he had good reason for that, sir—he saw with the better vision of penitent hope, an abiding-place like this of Clovernook; a sanctuary from his world of adulteration and short measure. Released by Mr. John Ketch—ha, sir! we have a hangman in Clovernook"—

"Is it possible!" we cried in great astonishment.

"One who was a hangman. Here, his duty is to prune trees, and kill pigs. Released, the publican turned his heels upon the world, and—his lucky star guiding him hither—he became the host of the Cup and Cake. His office is to supply the villagers of Clovernook with bite and sup, when it pleases them to rest at the Grotto. Employed in this duty, he never speaks; but at the 'Gratis,' sir, he is a talking fellow, and will chirrup a song like a cricket."

"How beautiful!" we exclaimed; for the Hermit's talk had carried us to the top of the hill. High bushes had, for some distance, shut out the view of the village beneath, so that making a sudden turn, the scene burst in all its unfolded loveliness upon us. At the summit was a wide, long marble seat canopied with trees of willow and acacia. We sat down, and revelled in our very heart, as we gazed about, below us.

"You are now," said the Hermit, "on the top of Gossip Hill; and there at our feet, sparkling like an emerald in the sun, lies Clovernook. Now, sir," cried the Hermit, and his face fell into shadow, "I have seen nearly all the granite and marble triumphs of the world: all the structures set up by the vanity of man to dare time to do its worst. And I have never looked at those mighty conquests of stone—those altars where men may venerate the might and grandeur of human labour—that I have not been saddened by the thought, the idle fancy, that the very blood and marrow of men, victims of lawless rule, cemented the blocks before me. I have looked at the Pyramids, and seen ten thousand thousand ghostly faces staring on me: yea the whole mass has seemed to me the petrified bones of a thousand, thousand slaves. Antiquity cannot take out the blood-mark: philosophy, or what has quicker vision, sympathy, may still behold the stain; the winds of centuries cannot bleach it. I have galloped over the Appian Way, and my horse's hoofs have spurned what to my eyes was once the flesh of outraged man."

"Kindred thoughts," said we, "might give expression, animation, to every brick of every city."

"Certainly," said the Hermit, "if men would so consider it. What is Saint Paul's? A mass of stone, no more, to the tens of thousands that crawl, or lounge, or jerk, or hurry by it. Such it seems: but what is it, looking with thoughtful eyes? Why, a multitude of building activities. We look again: labour has ceased; the fabric is done; and the harmony of the work steals into our brain like the voice of a sweet singer."

"Even so," said we. "And thus the quietude of the scene about us takes possession of the soul, and soothes it down to gentleness and peace."

"Sir," cried the Hermit, "Corinth, Babylon, Palmyra, what city you will, was never so fair a sight as that village at our foot. A handful of its thatch is more than worth the brazen gates of Thebes. Its very chimney smoke rises to my nostrils, like the sweet odour of a sacrifice. And wherefore is it thus? What should make that little span of earth, with its few cottages, simple as swallows'-nests—what should give to that village worth and majesty not found in cities? Why, sir, the human goodness that sanctifies it. There the hearth-gods are gentleness and truth. There, man is not a lie to man; a daily shuffler, an allowed hypocrite, who, ostrich-like, hides his head in a bush of expediency, and thinks the angels see not his plumes of vanity fluttering about him. There, a creed is not a best coat, to be only worn upon certain days, lest it should be worn out: no sir, it is the every-day working-garment; and odd enough to say—a strange thing not credible in your outside world—the more the said coat is worn, the better and the brighter it becomes; and so," said the Hermit with a grave voice and an upward look, "and so to the end, until it is so bright, so beautiful, it seems to catch a lustre from approaching heaven."

The Hermit paused, and for some moments we both sat in silence contemplating the scene around and beneath us. At length we observed, gazing down upon the village,—"Its beauty seems to grow upon us."

"Yes," said the Hermit; "for the two devils, Hypocrisy and

Selfishness, those everywhere fiends of your world, have never entered there."

"Indeed they travel," said we.

"Why, with you," cried the Hermit, "they are as the universal Pan. Take me—in fancy, only, mark me—into your world, and tell me a sound that is not mixed with their voices, even though it may be a bishop's whisper: show me a thing they will not spot, even though it be a bishop's lawn. Why, they are the twin deities, or devilries of your earth; they shout from the housetops; they creak in carriage-wheels; they ring in the change of the shopkeeper: and with placid faces, I much fear it, they lay their hands above their fungus hearts, and cry 'content' and 'non-content,' and 'ay' and 'no,' in Lords and Commons."

"Indeed, sir," said we, "this is bitterness."

"Ha! ha!" and the Hermit laughed; "that's an old complaint." Then turning full upon us, the Sage of Bellyfulle, with a twinkling of the eye common to him when hit by some quaint thought, asked—"When the world was very young, do you know where Truth lived? Doubtless. In a well; that is a story, old almost as the stars. And there she dwelt, and the water of the well was in such high repute, men would use no drop of any other. And so they drank it, they washed their faces with it, cooked and scoured with it. There was no water like that from the well of Truth. Time plodded on, and the knaves, and the knaves' puppets, fools, vowed that the water became worse and worse, unfit for man or beast. It was brackish, foul, filthy, sulphurous; indeed, what was it not? Men refused even to wash their hands with it. No housewife would boil her lentils in it. Men, temperate men, qualified their wine with it; and after, swore it was the water that gave them the headache. Shepherds watered their flocks at the well, and, as the shepherds declared, the sheep fell into the rot. No man could say a good word for the water of the well of Truth: it was *so bitter* no man could stomach it. Whereupon the people took counsel, and determined to expel Truth from the well, some old varlets declaring that they knew the time when the well was most sweet and medicinal; but then it was before Truth had been permitted to take up her abode in it. It was Truth, and Truth only that had made the stream so shockingly bitter. And so, with one accord, they hauled Truth by the hair of her beautiful and immortal head from the well, and turned her naked upon the earth, to find shelter where she might. Of course, in her nude condition, she could not appear in cities. Nevertheless, though she herself was abused and driven to rocks and desert places, her well has maintained her name; and so for thousands of years men have drunk at what they called Truth's Well, only Truth was out. Certain it is, now and then she comes and takes up her old abiding-place; and then do good people, who have unwarily taken a mouthful of the water, spit it out again, and with wry faces, and shuddering anatomies, cry,—'How very bitter!' Sometimes, too, Truth, to get the poor devil a bad name, will wander like a stray gnat into his ink-bottle! Miserable scribbler! Branded, tattooed worse than any New Zealander with his own goose-quill. Virtuous, honest, benevolent people who love their species, that is, the Adam and Eve of the printing-office, the race of men and women in good bold type, for they care not so much about the living vulgarities; they scream like a lady at a loaded pistol, or rather like a thumb-sucking baby at aloes, at the man of bitter ink; it is so very bitter."

"Truly, sir," said we, "'tis not a profitable liquid to him who uses it."

"Sir," cried the Hermit, "I have much to say upon ink; but for the present, I will give you some brief advice. I know not your condition, nor do I seek to know it: you may be in the fulness of wealth and felicity. Nevertheless, sir, fortune, to try you, may compel you to be an author. You may, sir, live by self-consumption."

"How, sir?" we asked.

"Did you ever see a crowd of monkeys in a cage? Answer; and I will tell you what I mean by self-consumption. You have seen the animals?"

"Often," we replied.

"There is, I believe, a disease among monkeys: a horrid, morbid appetite which pricks the creature to nibble, and bite away his own tail."

"We have observed it," was our answer.

"Sir," cried the anchorite, "I've seen monkeys that have had the fit so very strong upon them, that their tails have been bitten short to the buttock—left with scarcely a stump for pity to weep over. What, think you, among the tribe of monkeys, were these animals with self-eaten tails?"

We could not tell.

"Alas! sir," cried the Hermit of Bellyfulle, "they were authors. And now, sir, let me for a moment speak of ink. I will, for an instant, do you the injury to imagine you an author. Now, sir, if you would keep a fair reputation, and not have dirty water thrown upon you, in the name of virtue, by moralists from attics—not be squirted at in the cause of benevolence by sensitive folks, who can scarcely spell the syllables that stand for the virtue, avoid bitter ink as you would shun the small-pox. No sir; dip your pen in a mild, sweet fluid; and if you will attend to my instructions, in this manner you will make it."

The Hermit cleared his throat, and seizing our right hand between his palms, and looking intently at us, spoke with an earnestness that played along our heart-strings. He began:—

"A way to make profitable ink:—Seek a she-ass, with a week-old foal, that has been foaled at the fall of the moon, for the moon is much to be considered in this matter. Go out at midnight, and milk the ass into a skillet that hath never been tainted with aught but oatmeal porridge. Whilst you milk, softly carol, 'Sing a song of sixpence,' 'Little Jack Horner,' or any other innocuous ballad. Put the milk by, and in the morning stir it with a pigeon's feather. Add to the milk the yolk of three phœnix' eggs. Boil it over a fire of cinnamon sticks, and then put to it an ounce of virgin honey, made by bees that never had a sting. Be particular in this, or the ink will be spoiled. When this is done, put by the mixture until the first of April. It matters not how long it may be till then, for the phœnix' eggs, when you have obtained them, will keep the milk sweet for ever. Well, on the first of April, before breaking your fast, take the milk and strain it carefully through the nightcap of your grandmother. If you have not a grandmother of your own, borrow a neighbour's. In three days the ink will be as good as ever it will be for use."

"And this," said we, "is the way to make a profitable compound?"

"You perceive," said the Hermit, "there is nothing bitter in the ingredients. Some of your critics might drink of the ink, as though it was their own mother's milk. Profitable, did you ask? Why there is sweetest sorcery in the ink. You have only to dip your pen into it, and whatever you write will be all that is mild and beautiful. There will be no wrong, no wickedness in this world—at least, by the grace of the ink, there will be none in your picture of it,—but it will be a world of unmixed virtues. Your ink will never then be led into the unprofitable knack of calling selfishness and villany by their proper names, but you will wink and let them 'trot by.' Every man will appear to you —at least your ink will make you swear he does—like Momus's man, with a pane of glass in his breast, and behind the glass, a ruddy angel! All the injustice of life—the wickedness that man in his sorry ignorance inflicts upon his neighbour, will be instinctively avoided by you; the while the injustice grows, and the wickedness triumphs, and you, with your sweet and profitable ink, have helped to cast no shame upon the abomination! And you will put all the world in holiday attire; the beggar-girl will be dressed in sarsnet and tiffany, and ploughmen themselves wear smock-frocks of white satin. And so doing, you will win the good word of those who never think for themselves—a large class, sir; and of those—almost as large—who think falsely for other people. You will be amiable, good, kind, far-seeing, deep-seeing, and you will not be bitter!"

"Truly, sir, the ink that will do this," said we, "is a golden gift."

"It has been found so," said the Hermit. "And now, sir, let me show you Clovernook and its population. Place these upon your nose, and look about you." With this, the Hermit gave us a pair of spectacles. The glasses were in a frame of heavy brass-work, curiously overwrought with strange, odd marks. Looking at them, we asked, "What may these denote?"

"I cannot tell," answered the Hermit. "They were the work of a Portuguese philosopher. The Inquisition found a gallantee-show in his house, and burnt him for a wizard. I bought the spectacles of his widow: she was blind, or, I take it, had never sold them. You will find them curious glasses."

Marvellous, in truth! Putting them on, the whole of the village was brought in wonderful distinctness to us. Though Gossip Hill was of exceeding height, and at least two miles distant from Clovernook, yet so strong was the power of the spectacles, that we could distinguish the white throats of the young martens thrust from the nests built beneath the cottage eaves; could see the tints of the houseleek on the cottage roofs, the colours and small threads of lichen on the church tower. "Wonderful—wonderful!" we cried.

"They are good glasses," said the Hermit—"very good. I have sat here, and looked through them so often, that I know every flaw and weather-stain on every roof and wall. Yet, some eyes they will not suit. Can you see the hour by the church clock?"

"The hour!" we cried. "Nay, we can see a fly upon the minute-hand."

"What is the fly about?" asked the Hermit, musingly.

"Nothing," we answered. "It is motionless."

"And the hand moves towards the hour? Is the fly still there?" asked the sage.

"Still there," said we.

"And still idle! Ha, my son," and the Hermit sighed, "how many of us are no other than lazy flies upon the hand of time? What other thing do you see?"

"A pair of daws. One of them has just flown up with stolen goods in its beak."

"The wicked one!" said the Hermit with a laugh. "Robs poor villagers, and yet lives in a church. They are old sinners, sir, those daws; I know them. They'd take tithe of wool from a day-old lamb, and the one chicken from a widow's one hen. Yet there they haunt and roost in their grave black, and bring scandal upon our dear old church by the rapacity of their ways." And then the Hermit smiled, and was silent. After a pause he asked, "What think you of our church of Clovernook?"

"Very beautiful," said we, "in its sweet simplicity;" for the doors were open, and we could see the whole interior of the building. "It looks the abode of peace and truth."

"Ay, it does, sir. Yet there is an old legend that in former times there was fierce strife in that little church. The quarrel is known as the schism of the Blue and Black. It was thus, sir:—The parson died; and when another parson was to be chosen, many of the congregation declared they would give ear to no preacher whose eyes were not blue. No grace could flow from a pastor with black eyes. Other of the people were as resolute on the contrary. They held blue eyes to be heretical, unbelieving, and typical of burning sulphur: hence, they would have black eyes in the parson, and none other."

"And how," we asked, "was the dispute accommodated?"

"In this wise: as neither party would give way, two persons were chosen. When Blue Eyes preached in the morning, Black Eyes held forth in the afternoon. Thus both congregations were equally satisfied, and, let us hope it, equally blessed."

"Do you believe this foolish tale?" we asked.

"There are people who call it fabulous—the gossip of fiction. I cannot say what happened in Clovernook, but I will tell you what I once saw in the land of the Mogul. There, sir, there were certain bonzes or priests, who, like the twirling dervises you may have heard of, were wont to show their devotion by spinning, like tops, in white gowns. Suddenly there came other dervises, who spun in black gowns; then others came, who spun in yellow raiment; others in scarlet; others in purple. And every colour had its champions and apostles; and there were many foul words, and a little foul play, exchanged among them. The tumult convulsed the land—every party vowing to fight to the death for the one colour. When I left the country, it was torn to pieces by the separate factions of the separate coloured gowns. After some years I returned, and found the whole land in peace; and how, sir, think you, was amity restored? A great man—a man of genius and benevolence—arose, and he combined all the opposite colours into one stedfast, admiring body of himself; for he, looking upon any colour as of no matter, if the twirling were good—if the spinning were sincere—he, the meek and easy man, spun in something very like a harlequin's jacket."

"A pagan philosopher," said we.

"There was some thought, some suggestive wisdom, in this harlequin humour. The light that blesses us, is poured upon us in one white stream from the everlasting fount; and yet it is a light of many colours. Alas, my son!" cried the sage, "what a place would this be, if the many-coloured creeds of this world did not, by Almighty goodness, make the white light of the world to come!"

The Hermit paused, and we continued to survey the interior of the church. "Beautifully simple," said we; "no stained glass: no gold-fringed, gold-tasseled pulpit cushion; and no pews."

"Why, no," said the Hermit, "no pews. In your world, I have puzzled myself to think what kind of place your stickling pew-holders must paint to themselves when they imagine heaven? A place with pews? With a better sort of velvet—softer seats—more harmonious hinges to the doors—white, cloud-like hassocks?"

"They can have no such thoughts," cried we.

"Why not?" asked the Hermit briskly. "Nay, they must. What *is*, or should be, a church to the mind of the worshipper, but as the porch to eternity; wherein he stands, pondering the terrible mystery within him: a place set apart from the sordid cares and crimes of the world, where, shaking the dust from his soul, he hopes, fears, dreads, prays for an angelic change?—He is at the outer door of the dread Future; and shall he there whine like a canting beggarman at the threshold? Tell lies of sores and wretchedness? shall he call himself a worm, yet, in the pride of his maggot heart, enshrine himself in a cabinet, shrinking from the neighbourhood of brother crawlers? Think you," said the Hermit, "that men will rise in pews? I fear me not."

Again the Hermit paused. "What think you of our churchyard?" he asked. "You see, there are no cypresses; no weeping willows; no undertaker yews; but sweet, odorous shrubs and orange trees, with bud, blossom, and the ripe fruit: types of those who lie below."

"And no epitaphs?" said we.

"Nor naked skulls, nor cross-bones carved in stone; nor cherub cheeks, with marble tears; nor aught of the gimcrackery of woe that libels death, making the deliverer horrible. Beneficent death! In the churchyards of your outside world he sits like a blood-smeared Indian, counting his scalps. And then, your tombstones! What a multitude of contrary counsel —of creed-denying misery is there! I have walked among them; and fancy has given to them features, expression; the embodied voice and feeling of the written thing. Why one howls, 'worms and darkness,' in the desolation of despair; one with wailing, shivering voice, cries—'the cold, cold grave;' another gnashes its teeth at the 'tyrant death.' And are these the looks, the voices, the words of hope—the words of the faith the men professed to die in? It would be more than curious," said the Hermit, in a solemn tone, "if the spirits of the dead might write their own epitaphs."

The deep earnestness of the Hermit's manner made us gaze at him. It was strange; but he appeared to us almost a double man. His face seemed to lose its fleshly, full-fed, laughing look, when he talked in this wise—and was refined and animated; wholly redeemed from its vinous aspect by the seriousness of his discourse. At his cell, he seemed to us the champion and the genius of creature-comforts—the true and doughty Hermit of Bellyfulle; and now discoursing of death, his wrongs, and the fopperies cast upon him, the Hermit appeared as one who had castigated his spirit in the wilderness.

"Is it not strange," asked the Hermit, "that men should seek for skulls and bones, and turned-down torches, to make them feel the true solemnity of death? These things are to the imagination what strong liquors are to the blood. They confuse the sense of truth. Can there be a more beautiful or more hopeful memento of the dead, than the mere heap of earth that covers them? Lovely, pregnant earth! Teeming with life! Holding in its dusty bed the colour and the sweetness of the future amaranth! And yet in your world, you place a skull and cross-bones over dead men's clay, and write up desolate sentences of worms and darkness; of terror and the fell destroyer; as though the wailing spirit of the dead cried from beneath. Verily, sir," said the Hermit, "the tombstones of a Christian churchyard do at times jangle with the sweet spirit of Christianity. I have looked at them with pity; may I be pardoned the emotion! sometimes with slight resentment."

"The graves beneath us are covered with herbs and flowers. None osier-bound," said we.

"Look at the wall, there, to the right," said the Hermit.

We looked, and saw a long row of bee-hives. "Bees hived in a churchyard!" we cried, astonished.

"Every grave," said the Hermit, "is planted with thyme and other herbs; with flowers, that the bees most love. The whole village is supplied with honey, sucked, elaborated from the churchyard. There, my bones will lie. And there the bees will work, and working, sing above them. To my heathen mind a sweeter, a more hopeful music, than dolorous words of worms and darkness, chipped by stone-cutter."

"Bees hived in a place of graves!" we repeated. "'Tis a strange fancy."

"Call it what you will," said the Hermit, "we leave it to your outside world to seek for sighs and groans, and tribulation, in your burying places. The villagers of Clovernook—great happiness is it that it is so—seek nought but honey from the churchyard."

"Who is that—the sexton?" we asked, seeing an old hale man, with mattock and axe, enter at the gate.

"Our sexton," said the Hermit. "In your world, he was a man of pills; a most potent, money-seeking quack. His penance, here, is to dig graves. With you, it may be said, he employed journeymen."

"He was known as the sexton's friend. But," said we, "you have several times spoken of penance. Are all the dwellers of Clovernook vowed to penance for the follies or the worse guilt of their former lives?"

"Assuredly," said the Hermit. "Save the few children born here, nearly all the men and women of Clovernook take some self-imposed task, to cleanse themselves of past foulness, past folly. I had forgotten," said the Hermit, rising, "I ought first to have shown you THE VALLEY OF NAPS."

"The Valley of Naps!" we cried; "what place is that?"

"It lies on the other side of the Hill, between this and the village. By that valley all who come from your world to end their lives in Clovernook, are made to enter. Here," said the Hermit, turning his back upon the village, and following a narrow, winding path—"here you may see something of it. Look," said the Hermit, and he pointed downwards to a dark speck of wood. "Your spectacles will serve you little here. That black blot of trees—that is the entrance to the Valley of Naps. When the traveller arrives there, he puts up at The Warming-Pan—the only hostelry in the Valley. The landlord is said to have been a Lord Chancellor in his day; and his servants customs and excise officers. The traveller is shown to bed, and after a nap of some six months, he rises, puts on new clothes, and having left his old face at the Shrine of the Looking-Glass, sets forward to Clovernook."

"Dear sir," we cried, "explain all this. What do you mean? How can a man leave his face?"

"Why, sir," asked the eremite, "think you that Clovernook would be the Paradise it is, if its villagers had brought their worldly visages with them? Oh, most beautiful and most foul is the human countenance! A page, writ with sunny characters —a greasy, dirty, dog's-eared leaf! Are there not faces, with every trace of divinity *thought out* of them? Faces, with quick, hungry, subtle eyes; and cheeks and brows, lined and cut as with the sharp edges of sixpences? Have you walked the streets of cities and not beheld such faces? If so, believe it, you have dull eyes. Well, the people bound for Clovernook leave the raiment of the outer world at the Warming-Pan; and with it their natures as deformed and warped in the world they have quitted. Then they call at the Shrine of the Looking-Glass, and take a last peep of their worldly faces. They look into the mirror, and looking, leave all the black lines, the wrinkles of calculation, the pallor and sallowness of sorrow in the glass, and step forward with faces happy, bright, and beaming as from a talk with angels."

"And, of course, never again visit the Valley of Naps?" said we.

"Yes, indeed," said the Hermit, "and have solemn sport there. I have told you, that every traveller leaves at the Warming-Pan his coarse and sordid worldly nature with his old clothes. Well, every New Year's Eve, these past natures, these phantasma of the world without, appear in the cast raiment, and are invited by the purified villagers of Clovernook, their past owners. There is, I have said, much sport there; and it happens after this fashion. Although everybody beside knows the shadow, the ghost of the past, to be the past property of the man upon whom the spectre fixes itself; yet does the amended man himself deny the phantom; endeavouring by all means to put it off upon any other of his fellows. It is strange sport to see how ghosts are bandied about; like unacknowledged paupers in the world you come from."

"But the villagers of Clovernook," said we, "do not forget their former doings?"

"On the contrary," replied the Hermit, "they have a quick, most curious knowledge of their past lives, save on the solemnity of New Year's Eve; and then, for the time, do they forget all things. You see our sexton there"—for by this time we had returned to our seat, looking down upon Clovernook,—"there was rare sport with him at Shadow Fair."

"Shadow Fair!" we echoed. "Is that the name of the festival held in the Valley of Naps?"

"It is; and the sexton went, with others, last New Year's

Eve. He was immediately owned by his ghost, the phantasm, the slough of his moral self left at the Warming-Pan. The ghost was a long, thin-faced ghost, with a bit of mangy hair on the upper lip. The ghost made up to the sexton, who immediately took to his heels, the ghost following him, and pelting him with the spectres of his own pills, as folks pelt one another with sugar-plums at a carnival. There was great sport, I can tell you. The pills—the ghost seemed to have myriads of them in his coat-pockets,—fell in showers about the sexton, the ghost straining its thin voice, and calling out that the sexton could not take too many of them. Where the pills fell, poisonous fungus, small toadstools, with bolus heads, came up, killing everything around."

"And will the poor sexton suffer the same pelting next New Year's Eve?" we asked.

"Assuredly," said the Hermit.

"May he not have better wisdom than to visit Shadow Fair?" said we.

"He cannot choose," replied the Hermit. "It is the inevitable fate of every villager of Clovernook, to go every New Year's Eve to the Valley of Naps."

"What! is death in the village?" we asked, seeing the sexton doff his coat, and begin delving.

"Yes. A villager died three days ago. He was ninety-three, and this day week—yes, this day week—he played at cricket."

"And who is that old man," we asked, "with long white hair, at the bottom of the hill, peeping and prying into the hedge?"

"He, sir, was a sharp attorney; a very keen tool, indeed, in your world," said the Hermit; "but here he spends his days picking cotton blight and canker from the trees, and freeing flies from cobwebs."

"And here comes a gay, thin-faced old man, with a wooden leg."

"He was a great general—a very mighty general; he has killed his thousands, and knocked down cities by the dozen. And now, what think you, does he in Clovernook? Why, every evening he waits in the skittle-ground of the 'Gratis' to set up the nine-pins. The rest of his time he employs snaring jays, daws, and magpies; and when he has taught them to cry '*Peace, peace, peace!*' he lets them fly, as he says, to instruct their ignorant brethren."

"And now the general meets a tall, lusty man."

"I know him. He was a prime minister for years. Here he turns humming-tops and other nick-nacks for children."

"And who is this,—?"

"Patience," said the Hermit, with a smile, as he rose from his seat, "you will know all the villagers in good time—shall meet them all, and hear their stories, too, at our only inn, the 'Gratis.'"

With growing reverence for the Sage, we attended the Hermit Bellyfulle back to his cell. "In half an hour," said he, graciously smiling, "it will be dinner time. Half an hour," he repeated with musical emphasis, as he passed into his chamber Having profitably employed the time with cold water, we then, refreshed, yet hungry, sought our host. The Hermit awaited us. He had put aside his cloak of the morning, and was again wrapped in his old damask gown. He perceived that we observed the change. "My custom, sir," he said; "I never yet could dine in full dress. The digestive organs, sir, abominate close buttoning; and do their work sulkily, grumblingly. No, sir; a man in full dress may chew and swallow, but he never dines. The stomach cannot honestly perform its functions in state." We smiled: whereupon the Hermit with a grave, sly look, asked—"Will you answer me this question?" We bowed. "Do you think it in the power of mortal man to give a fair, wise, learned judgment upon any dish or sauce soever, the said man being, at the time of tasting, in tight boots? Sir, it is impossible. The judicial organ is too delicate, too exquisitely nerved, to vindicate its sweet prerogative, unless the whole man, morally and bodily, be in a state of deep repose. And, therefore, can there be a greater wrong committed upon the cook, than the common injury of dining to music? It is abominable. Once—I well remember it—I chewed to the clangor, and crash, and thunder of a military band. Well, sir, the dinner was excellent—admirable as a dinner; but I have no more judgment than a beast, if I had any other taste in my mouth save the brass of the trumpets, and the tough parchment of the drum-heads. Silence, profound and solemn, is due to the first hour of dining. One minute before that time the finest jest is but a presumptuous impertinence. In my encyclopædia of the kitchen I have treated of these things—philosophically and at large. For the present"——

Here the Hermit upraised his forefinger, and at the same time the door was opened, and a man, drest in snowy white, followed by Bezoar, brought in the first dish. Placing it upon the table, the man disappeared, Bezoar taking his place behind the Hermit's chair. And then the Hermit rose, and baring his head, said grace. "Thanks be rendered for this: and may no man dine worse!" With this short ceremony the Hermit entered upon his serious task. He dined as though he was fulfilling a devout exercise of his life. Not a word escaped him, as dish after dish was levied upon, then taken away. We confess our ignorance of the many delicious things set before the Hermit, they had been so disguised, so elevated by the art of the cook. As, in silence, we watched the doings of the Sage—for soon we sat with idle knife and fork, whilst still our host cut away—we marvelled that a man so capable of solemn thoughts—a man who could discourse, as he had done, upon a churchyard—and the pride, the guilt, the empty foolishness of life—should be so curious, so eager in his food. With his strange quickness of mind, he jumped at our thoughts, and said—"I doubt not I can guess your meditation. I, myself, with the wings of my soul, have tried to escape from this mound of flesh," and he glanced at his stomach ; "but the soul is, at best, as a trained hawk ; let it fly as high as it will, there is its master for the time, with his feet upon the earth ; and straightway it drops from the clouds at his call." Saying this, the Hermit pushed away his final plate. He had dined—for he had spoken.

"This wine is miraculous," said we, filling a glass of tokay.

"Yes ; I shall remain some time in Hungary," answered the Hermit, sipping the liquor with educated lips. "This," said the Sage, holding the wine between him and the light, "this is the true blood of our dear mother earth. I have often wondered at the sneaking ingratitude of astronomical men. In the name of grapes, why should not Bacchus have a star to himself? We have only to reflect upon the characters of the Pagan deities siderally honoured, to feel the indignity done to Bacchus. There is Saturn, a tyrant and a child-eater,—he must be set in a ring, and nominally hung in the sky. Mars, a bully, and nine times out of ten no whit better than a highwayman or burglar,—he, too, must twinkle insultingly upon men, made fools and rogues, tyrants and victims, by his abominable influence ; yes, he, the recruiting sergeant of the heavens—must stare with his red face upon us ;—and Mercury, thief and orator to boot, may wink through the long night, all having their admirers and worshippers ; whilst for Bacchus, he, with all his great bounty, is starless and unhonoured. 'Twould be a pleasant, yea a proper thing," said the Hermit with a laugh, "to find a fire-new planet for him."

"Indeed," we answered, "in these days, it is not likely that Bacchus will meet with so bountiful an astronomer. In the outside world—to use your own words of Clovernook —his godship is in sad disgrace. His bottles are broken ; his pottle pots shivered ; his name anathematised. Boys and girls, scarcely forgetful of the taste of mother's milk, renounce him and his ways ; and more, by the potent eloquence of childhood, compel father and mother to forswear the worship of the frantic god. Drunkenness itself has lost its blotched and scarlet face, and, like the hart, pants only for pure water."

"Can it be?" asked the Hermit. "I never knew a drunkard so reformed, unless, indeed, he had been to the Land of Turveytop."

"The Land of Turveytop!" we cried: "where may that be? what people inhabit it, and what wonders may be done there?"

"As for its latitude," said the Hermit, "why, I will not puzzle your geography with it. The people are of gigantic stature, at least forty feet high; yet mild and benevolent — the nurses and pastors of the ordinary race of mortals."

"And is the land far distant?" we asked.

"Some hundred leagues, no more, from Clovernook. I was brought up there: understand me—brought up, after the fashion of the Turveytopians. The truth is, when I had arrived at man's estate, I found myself in possession of a bit of nearly every vice that blackens the sons of Adam. I will not run over the list, but to save your time and my breath will merely desire you to think me at that time knowing in all the rascally accomplishments generally shared among a crowd of sinners. And yet, though wild and lawless, and hotly pursuing all sorts of mad delights, I never felt a touch of happiness. My pleasure was at best delirium that left me spent and heavy-hearted. It was in one of those moods, when the whole world about me was, to my moral vision, coloured like so much brown paper, that walking at the base of a high mountain, it suddenly opened before me. Sir," said the Hermit, with a grave look that rebuked our gaze of incredulity, "I say the mountain opened. A narrow passage, adown which the sun shone with intense brightness, and whence I heard delicious sounds, as of distant music, was before me. Without a thought I entered it; when having run a few paces, I turned round, and — the marrow froze in my bones — I saw the mountain had closed again behind me. I was trapped; swallowed; a miserable lump of breathing mortality in the bowels of the earth. Great was the anguish of my heart; yet, strangely enough, light, like sunlight, streamed down the long passage before me, and the sounds of the music became louder and louder. By degrees they carried peace and fortitude into my soul, and I began to walk rapidly forward. As I walked, the passage became wider, and at length ended in an open country; where, save that the grass, the flowers, the trees, and all things about me, were of gigantic proportions, all in form was the same as the things of the world I had left. I walked until I saw, what at first appeared to me, huge rocks. Continuing to approach them, I discovered them to be houses. My heart dropped within me, for I feared that I was in a land of giants. As the thought fell upon me, I turned round and almost swooned to the earth with fear. A giantess of nine-and-thirty feet three inches high — as I afterwards discovered — stood before me. Instantly I believed I was destined to be eaten alive. Though constitutionally gallant towards the sex, I was yet so wayward, that I would rather have fallen into the jaws of a tigress or any other female beast, than have formed the meal of the giantess before me. She saw my terror, and a smile broke upon her broad, good-humoured face, like a sunbeam on a rose-garden. A few strides brought her to me. I fell upon my knees, and lifted up my hands imploringly to her. Never did man drop at the foot of woman in more earnestness of soul. Never could he pray more fervently to be taken in marriage, than did I supplicate not to be chewed alive. The giantess, with a laugh that almost stunned me, bent over me ; chucked me under the chin ; playfully nipped the end of my nose ; indented the tip of her forefinger in both my cheeks, and shrilly crying *klukklukkluk*,—which answers to our homely *catchy, catchy*,—took me in her arms like a raw, red-faced, hour-old baby."

" A strange place this Turveytop, and a strange people," cried we. " And amongst these folks you say you were brought up ? Brought up ! Why, you were of man's estate when the mountain opened and received you."

"True ; but it is the benevolence of the Turveytopians to take in men and women to nurse : to bring them up anew ; and to this philanthropic end, every new-comer is treated as a new-born babe. Bless you ! I have seen a philosopher, who had made a great noise among his brother pigmies on the outside of the mountain, I have seen him sent back to nurse's milk and pap. The one great principle of the Turveytopians is this, to take no knowledge for granted on the part of those they nurse. May this tokay, sir,"—cried the Hermit, about to quaff — "may it turn to train oil in my gullet, if I have not seen a Chancellor made, whether or no, to suck his thumb, because the little varlet would affect precocity and quarrel with his nurse, as if to suck his thumb was an act below his consequence. I have seen, too, a Lord Chamberlain taught again to walk : yes, seen him toddling after a sugar-stick held temptingly, encouragingly, 'twixt his nurse's fingers."

" And for what purpose," we asked, " this teaching over again ? Was it not a waste of time and pains ? "

"Assuredly not," answered the Hermit gravely; and then fixing his eye upon us, he asked, "Have you not known folks in the outside world, who — standing it may be within a few years of their grave — seemed, nevertheless, as if they had learned all their worldly knowledge the wrong way? As if, to be aught good, wise, and morally dignified, they should learn the lesson of life again; yea, beginning in the nursery, should sprawl and roar in the nurse's lap? You cannot think this? It matters not: the honest Turveytopians have this belief, and therefore take weak and wicked men and women, of every age, as younglings, from the womb: they are called the babes of the mountain—children of earth; and for the many vices and faults which they bring with them into Turveytop, why, they are considered as spots and flaws inseparable from their former condition. "Oh! the men I have seen there," cried the Hermit, with a laugh—"the kings, lords, bishops, lawmakers I have seen, all put into second swaddling-clothes, and brought up again as gentle, wise, charitable, sagacious folk, doing good credit to the beautiful earth, which, in their former days, they so grievously scandalised."

"But surely," said we, "it was to take the training a little too far back? We cannot, we repeat, but think it loss of time and trouble."

"Certainly not," cried the Hermit. "Consider, sir, how delightful it must be, by a strong effort of the soul, to lose and forget all that we have mislearned of life, and so begin the lesson again — with clear heads and ruddy hearts. To compass this with the reprobates of the world is the purpose of the Turveytopians—wise, gracious, wonderful giants that they are! mighty only in their goodness, superhuman in their sweet charities."

"Pray," we cried, "tell us your history whilst in Turveytop."

"You shall hear it, sir," said the Hermit, "and the brief histories of many others."

We drew close to the table, and waited the story with impatience.

"Though trembling violently in the arms of the giantess, I became gradually self-assured by the sweet good-humour of my nurse. She gazed and nodded smilingly at me, like a girl with a new doll; and although I felt distressed and humiliated, I nevertheless smiled — though I fear a wan, sickly smile — in acknowledgment of her tenderness. Then she threw me up in the air, and caught me again in her arms. Never before had I been so far from earth. My head swam, and my stomach—I had that day dined off eel-pie and goose — threatened treachery, when I heard a loud voice exclaim in the very purest English, — for the Turveytopians know all the languages of the earth,—'Slut! baggage! Is that the way to toss and jolt a new-born babe?' Holding me in her arms, my nurse turned round, and I beheld in the speaker a matronly giantess, with a kind, motherly countenance. 'A pretty skittish thing you are to trust babies to,' she cried. 'Poor poppet,' — and the benevolent gentlewoman wiped my nose,—'it doesn't look half an hour old; and yet here you are, throwing it up and churning its little bowels like butter.' 'La, grandmother!' cried the girl, 'it doesn't mind it. See, if it doesn't laugh!' I certainly did grin. 'Laugh!' said the old dame; 'you know-nothing hoyden! laugh! Poor little heart, it's wind.' At this, I couldn't help it, I chuckled vigorously. 'There! if the dear lamb isn't choking,' cried the woman; 'away with it to the nursery, or you'll have its precious life upon your soul.' Instantly the girl hugged me to her bosom, cast her apron over me, and ran — I thought she flew — with all her legs. I saw nothing until the girl carried me into a spacious lofty room, which in a moment I knew must be the nursery. There were about twenty other infants, from a day to a week old; infants I must call them, though all of them were older than myself. Some were screaming, shouting, swearing in the most shocking manner that they were not babies, that they were men—wise, learned, authoritative men—and would shake the pillars of the heavens ere they would be treated as sucklings."

"And what said the nurses?" we asked.

"Oh, sir! what nurses usually say at such a time. They bawled and shouted too. Then they called the babies 'precious ducks,' 'darlings,' 'apples of their eyes,' 'plagues,' and then 'precious ducks' again. There was an old dowager from the outside world — how she had ever wandered into Turveytop I know not — who, screaming like a catcall, begged to ask the wretches if they knew what they were about. Declared that she had a son lord chief justice, and then desired to know if she was to be treated like a baby!"

"And what was the answer?" we inquired.

"None, sir," said the Hermit—"none, save that the woman who was swathing and dressing her, shrilly sang a nursery song, and tossed her about like so much pie-crust. From this, I found that no big words, no struggling of mine, would prevail, and therefore meekly resigned myself. And, sir, I had my reward; for having been properly powdered and swaddled, my nurse declared that I was the quietest dove of a babe she had ever handled—quite a lamb."

"And, pray forgive the question, did they really give you to a wet nurse?"

"They did, sir,"—answered the Hermit smiling, "and a very comfortable woman she was. It was wonderful how soon I accommodated myself to a milk diet. In a short time I seemed to have sucked in a serenity of soul. Recovered somewhat from the amazement of the day, I took counsel with myself in bed."

"Delicious, peace-giving bed!" we cried.

The Hermit looked grave. "Happy is the man," he answered, "who can say peace-giving bed. For oh, sir! what a rack to the spirit of man may be found in goosedown! You do not seem to apprehend me? Consider, sir, what an unavoidable self-confessional is bed. Think, sir, what it is to have our conscience put to the question of goose-feathers. You are in bed, peace-giving bed, you say — it is deep night; and in that solemn pause, you seem to feel the pulse—to hear the very heart of time. You try to think of many things, but the spirit or demon of the bed sets up yourself before yourself — brings all your doings to the bar of your own conscience; and what a set of scurvy gaol-birds may be among them! They peep in at your curtains, crowd at the foot of your bed, and though you burn no rushlight, you see their leering, sneaking faces. Alas! you cannot disown them: you know that some time or other you have given them house-room in your soul, and, like unclean things, they have repaid the hospitality with defilement. There they are, old co-mates, sworn acquaintances; and yet the world could not believe that, for a moment, you kept such company. Oh, no! abroad in the world you have all sorts of graces accounted to you. Alack! that night-cap and sheets should, to your own conscience, make you bankrupt! They make you know yourself hypocrite; stand before you, even though you lie in darkness, your polished, easy, cordial, out-door self—a man without a subterfuge, a soul without a meanness. And your head upon your pillow — if conscious blood beat at your heart—you blush for the counterfeit you have a thousand times put off upon the world, and shudder at the accusing naughtiness about you. Peace-giving bed! It may be so; and it may be—oh, sir!" cried the Sage of Bellyfulle, "if all our faults, our little tricks, our petty cozenings, our bo-peep moods with truth and justice, could be sent upon us in the blankets, all embodied, sir, in fleas, how many of us of lily skins would get up spotted scarlet?"

"But surely, sir," said we, "you had no time for such remorseful thoughts in the nursery?"

"No — not then," answered the Hermit. "Then, as I said, I took counsel of myself; and resolved, since the strangeness of my fate had cast me in Turveytop, to bear with meekness all that might befal me. The giant-folk are wise, benevolent, I thought; else, wherefore should they seek to purge men of their wicked worldliness, taking them back to their first swaddling hour, that they may learn the lesson of life anew? Yes; I will forget the scurvy wisdom that puffed my heart, and made me cock my cap, a knowing fellow. I will let the cunning, self-complacent, braggart creature die here where I am, and be taken up a baby—yea, a very suckling."

"This, sir," we said, "would be a rare secret to teach men."

"It was taught in Turveytop—truly taught; but I know not how it was, there was something in the place, the people—that after a time made the most stubborn of the babes apt and cunning pupils. For myself, I resolved upon docility; and lying where my nurse had placed me, I bade all my rascal thoughts depart; by a strong effort of the soul kicked from my brain many a shrewd deceit, that, in former days, I had treasured more than gold and jewels."

"And so became a babe again?"

"What a delicious pause was that! How sweet that cleanliness of soul! There I lay in thoughts of lavender; for the babyhood of Turveytop is not like our first childhood. There, man is not a midway thing, between two mysteries, the cradle and the coffin. No, sir; having purged my brain of its secret wickedness, I was conscious of my sweet condition. I felt and rejoiced in my infancy of heart, and I have not forgotten its deliciousness. I was resolved to begin my life anew; and as a droll destiny had given me a nursling to the giants, I so played my part of babyhood, that my nurse outsounded all her gossips with my praises. Thus I never cried nor whimpered, but suffered myself to be dressed and undressed, crowing the while, and walking up my nurse's knees — and cooing and laughing in her lap. In this, as I have said, I found my account: in a fortnight I was short-coated, and in another fortnight was put upon my feet, for my nurse declared that in a week I should be able to walk alone. Many of my companions were less docile. There was one—he had been an admiral — who roared and swore in a terrible vein, and vowed he would only be quieted with pig-tail tobacco. Another, a weazened babe—a money-lender in former life—was never silent but when he was allowed to wear his nurse's silver thimble on his head, he did so love the metal. Most of the children, however, lost by degrees the errors and weaknesses of their former days, and in time became span-new creatures."

"And pray, sir," we asked, "what term of probation did they pass, ere they were permitted to claim man's estate?"

"That depended upon the progress of the individual; for, with the Turveytopians, the year of discretion was not fixed by the almanac, but by the wisdom and purity of the neophyte. There were, certainly, a few babies — I must still call them so — who had been in Turveytop for centuries. You are aware, sir, that it was the fashion with those sorry dogs the Romans, when any of their heroes were missing, to swear that they had been carried off by Mars, charioted by a clap of thunder. A flam, sir—a political flam—to double-gild the memory of ruffians. The truth is, they were taken to Turveytop, and there they still remain; they are such hopeless blockheads, they can learn nothing good and peaceable. There, they are vermin-hunters to the giants, waging war with the rats and mice; no child's sport, sir, when you consider the strength and immensity of the beasts. Poor King Arthur, whom the Welshmen look for — and King Sebastian, still expected by all believing Portuguese—both of them are in Turveytop, and there, I think, are likely to remain. Arthur, the mirror of knighthood, is a sulky, watery-headed lout, continually robbing the other children of their nuts and apples—throwing sticks at the legs of flies, and slily sticking pins into the youngest babies. The Welshmen believe in Arthur's return, faithfully as in leeks; but, sir, the Turveytopians know that he would only spoil his reputation, so keep him where he his. And for the good King Sebastian, who, nearly three hundred years ago, passed into Africa, to cut Moorish throats, he was spirited off to Turveytop, to be taught decent dealing."

"And how has the teaching prospered?" we inquired.

"Very badly, sir," answered the Hermit. "I don't know how it is, but the heroes and wise folks of our world become sad lubbers and dunces among the giants. I have seen King Sebastian seated with twenty other kings and legislators, all of them famous upon our earth for their justice and wisdom; I have seen each of them, with a piece of chalk between his fingers, vainly trying to draw a straight line. For centuries have they in Turveytop been set to do such simple task, before they should be permitted to return to their old world again; yet has no one of them accomplished it. No, sir; there is not one of them who does not draw zig-zag. And the best of it is, each of them swears that his own crookedness is the straightest of the straight. The Turveytop geometrician shakes his head with a mild pity, whereupon the late kings and lawmakers sulk, and, in a low voice, swear at him. Fate alone can tell when poor Sebastian will get to Portugal again. A sad thing for him, sir," said the Hermit

—"for I doubt not that there his worst zig-zag might pass for a perfect straight line. The dunces I have heard at school, too!"—and the Hermit sighed.

"Then they sent you all to school?" we observed.

"Assuredly," said the Hermit, "and to me sweet and pleasant was the academy. Not that we were packed off, to be nailed to a form, as soon as we could lisp: the Turveytopians are wiser, more benevolent. No; we sprawled and kicked about in the sun, and rode cock-horse upon the backs of snails, and took flying leaps upon grasshoppers, and tore our frocks, and rolled in puddles, and dirtied our faces, and ran thorns into our fingers—and, in short, did every other trick that endears a child to its parents. Yes, our constitution was suffered to strengthen like palm-trees in the sun and air, and the alphabet was an unthought-of calamity, until we were at least seven years old. The girls were taken in hand at five; for women, sir, are somehow always in advance of us."

"Is that your faith?"

"Is it not indisputable? Though Eve was younger than Adam, was she not more than a match for him? As for girls," said the Hermit with a gentle chuckle, "I know not if it be not a great defect in their education that they should be taught to read and write at all."

"It cannot be, sir," we cried. "What! rear the tender, blooming souls in ignorance?"

"Why not?" said the Hermit, stroking his chin, whilst his eye twinkled. "Why not, sir? Ignorance is the mother of admiration. Perhaps they'd love us all the better for it. Ha, my friend! you know not what mischief may be done when you teach a girl to spell, and put a pen in her hand. It's adding weapons of offence where there was more than enough before. 'Tis like giving another quill to a porcupine. Relentless souls, how many of them *will* write! Man,—let him be praised, though praised in a whisper for it!—has his fits of lordly idleness, his accidental headache in the morning, and he turns from his standish as from a nauseous draught, and his grey goose feather rises upon his stomach as though it was the bird's yesterday's flesh; and so, taking his hat, he lounges abroad, hugging his laziness and dearly loving it: or he sits in his chair, the world unthought-of, humming upon its axis, and he, in sweetest independence, twiddling his thumbs. Not so with woman, sir; she has no idleness, not she; that blot darkens not the crystal purity of her resolution. She, unlike frail bibulous man, has never one of *his* headaches! No, sir, the world gets no such respite. Fatally industrious, and sweetly temperate, your writing woman, like a cuttle-fish, secretes ink for every day."

"'Twill go ill with you," said we to the Sage, "should woman write your epitaph."

"Nay, her gratitude will protect me," answered the Hermit, "seeing that I shall then let her have what is dearest to the sex."

"And what is that?" we asked.

"The last word,"—and the Hermit blandly smiled. "Nevertheless, sir, let what I have said rest between us. For the sex—blessings on their honied hearts!—will forgive wrong, outrage, perjury sworn ten times deep—anything against their quiet, but a jest. Break a woman's heart, and she'll fit the pieces together, and, with a smile, assure the penitent that no mischief is done—indeed, and indeed, she was never better. Break a joke, light as water-bubble, upon her constancy, her magnanimity—nay, upon her cookery—and take good heed; she declares war—war to the scissors. There was my great aunt Dorcas. Poor soul! Her husband had tried the woman a hundred cruel ways, and found her, as her own mother declared, quite an angel. Her heart had been broken many, many years; and yet so well do women repair the ravages of time and accident, nobody would ever have thought it. Well, sir, this woman, who had endured wrong, neglect—nay, some did whisper, the slight of infidelity, to boot—this woman, who, placidly as a saint in China, had smiled upon a husband's villainies, at length parted from the man upon a custard. Yes, sir: her tyrant of a mate—as he thought, poor wretch! pleasantly enough—flung a heavy joke, before company, too, upon his wife's pastry. The man had never been known to attempt a jest till then. Whereupon, aunt Dorcas said she had endured enough; there was a limit even to a wife's forbearance. She rose from the table, and died upon a separate maintenance."

"Pray, sir," we inquired, "has your philosophy fathomed the cause of all this?"

"'Tis in the deeper gravity of the sex," said the Hermit. "Nay, sir, I mean it. They are shallow thinkers, sir, who declare women to be light and frivolous. Depend upon it, they take life much more in earnest than we do. Hence, sir, woman is rarely a joke-making animal. Far better than we does she know the perishable materials of which life is made, and takes serious care of them accordingly. And then, sir, the delicacy of the sex makes them shrink from a jest. Like pistol or small sword, it is a masculine weapon, and not to be intruded upon their gentle presence. No, sir; a woman may be brought to forgive bigamy, but not a joke."

"It may be so," said we ; "but, sir, all this time we have wandered from Turveytop. You were sent to school there, you say ?"

"I was ; and there, indeed, the time went gaily by. Benevolent and gentle was the schoolmaster, and worthy of the honours lavished by the state upon him. Ay, sir, you may look ; but in Turveytop the schoolmaster is not a half-drudge, half-executioner. No, sir ; the importance, the solemnity, of his mission is conceded. Children are not sent to him with no more ceremony than if they were terrier-pups, packed to the farrier to have their tails docked and their ears rounded. In Turveytop, the schoolmaster is considered the maker of the future people—the moral artificer of society. Hence, the state pays him peculiar consideration. It is allowed that his daily labours are in the immortal chambers of the mind ; the mind of childhood, new from the Maker's hand, and undefiled by the earth. Hence, there is a solemnity, almost a sacredness, in the schoolmaster's function : upon him and his high and tender doings does the state of Turveytop depend, that its prisons shall be few. It is for him to wage a daily war with the gaoler. His work is truly glorious, for it is with childhood—beautiful childhood !" cried the Hermit passionately—"holy childhood, with still the bloom of its first home upon it ! For, indeed, there is a sanctity about it ; it is a bright new-comer from the world unknown, a creature with unfolded soul ! And yet, sir, are there not states where, whilst yet the creature draws its pauper milk—of the same sort, by the way, that nurtured Abel—we give it to those fiends of earth, violence and wrong, and then scourge, imprison, hang the pupil for the teaching of its masters ? Childhood, with its innocence killed in the very seed ? Childhood, a fetid imp in rags, with fox-like, thievish eyes and lying breath, the foul vermin of a city ? Such, indeed, it is to the niceness of our senses, shrinking at the filth and whining of that world-wrinkled babe. But look at it aright, sir,"—cried the Hermit with new animation—"translate its mutterings into their true meaning. What do you see ? —what hear ? The lineaments and cryings of an accusing demon ; a giant thing of woe and mischiefs scowling and shrieking at the world that hath destroyed its holiness of life ; that, seizing it, yea from the hand of its Maker, hath defaced the divinity of its impress, and made it devil—a devil to do a devil's mischief ; then to be doomed and punished by a self-complacent world, that lays the demon in a felon's grave, and after, sighs and wrings the hands at human wickedness."

"In the strange land you speak of," we observed, wishing to divert the passion of the Hermit, for, indeed, he seemed strangely possessed,—"you said that childhood had its sacred claims allowed. There, all were taught, all tended. The schoolmaster, too, had high privileges?"

"The highest," cried the sage, his light good-humour returning. "Indeed, in Turveytop the schoolmasters may be said to take the place of our commanding soldiers. We give rank, distinction, high praises to generals and such folk for the cunning slaughter of their thousands. We take the foul smell out of bloodshed, and call men-quellers heroes. We give them gold lace, and stick feathers upon them, and hang them about with Orders of Saint Fire, Saint Pillage, and Saint Slaughter. We strip the skin from the innocent sheep to make rub-a-dub to their greatness, and blow their glory to the world from blatant brass. Now, the Turveytopians have no soldiers; but they give the same amount of honour to their schoolmasters. They have a belief that it is quite as noble to build up a mind as to hack a body; that to teach meekness, content, is as high a feat as to cut a man through the shoulder bone; that, in a word it is as wise and useful, and surely as seemly in the eye of watchful Heaven, to fill the human brain with thoughts of goodness, as to scatter it from a skull, cleft by the sword in twain. Hence, the schoolmaster in Turveytop is a great social authority, honoured by the state. The savage counts his glories by scalps; the refined man of war by his gazettes. The general kills five thousand men—defeats some twenty thousand. He may have picked a quarrel with them, that he might pick his sprig of laurel, and rejoice in lawful plunder. He has done his work upon humanity; he has acted his part in the world—a world of human sympathies—and he becomes earl, or steps up duke. It is his rightful wage, paid by a grateful hand. The schoolmaster of Turveytop numbers his scholars; shows the heroes he has made; the victors over self among his army; the troops of wise and peaceful citizens he has marshalled for the field of life, and is honoured and rewarded accordingly."

"And you were sent to one of these great pedagogues—these laurelled teachers?"

"Excellent old man!" cried the Hermit. "He was sorely tried by some of us. The perverseness, the stupidity of some of my school-fellows passes belief; yet the master's sweetness of spirit was unconquerable. Some of his pupils he never could teach to spell the commonest syllables. There was one boy—in our world he would have passed for about sixty-five—who never could master the word *good*. For years, as I understood, he had been haggling at it. 'Now, my poor little boy,' I have heard the schoolmaster cry a hundred and a hundred times, a melancholy smile upon his reverend face, 'now, my child, spell me *good*.' Whereupon the pupil—a thin-faced, greenish-eyed fellow, and, as I learned, a former dealer in foreign stocks—would answer '*g-o-l-d*.' And thus it had been with him for years; and thus, if alive, it may be with him now. Wretched little dunce! He could not comprehend any other way of spelling *good* than *g-o-l-d*. He, however, was not alone in his dulness. No; there were twenty other scholars from the outside word who still stumbled at the syllable. Will it be believed?—There was one boy, about fifty-two, with a drum-like belly and a somewhat purplish nose. It was whispered that, ere he was brought to Turveytop, he had been a rector, more than apostolically sharp for his tithes. Well, sir, you would have expected higher intelligence from such a scholar; yet somehow he never could master the monosyllable. '*Good*' would be the word of the teacher, and still the fat-bellied boy would spell '*p-i-g*.' How our dear schoolmaster would look perplexed! How plainly I could see him striving to account for the confusion in the pupil's mind, that still from year to year had gone on spelling '*good*' with the letters '*p-i-g*.' The simple monosyllable was a trying task for many of the scholars. Indeed, how few of them—from the defect of their previous worldly education—could spell the word the proper way! The old admiral I have already spoken of, always insisted upon spelling it—'*g-r-o-g*.' From my heart, I pitied the schoolmaster; for whilst other teachers were seeing the young Turveytopians advance in all their daily lessons, and so, doing their master honour in the land, our poor pedagogue was doomed to sit almost hopelessly amid a crowd of dunces, whose dull or debauched faculties rendered them incapable of the easiest tasks. And yet no word of passion or reproach ever escaped the teacher. 'Poor little boy,' he would say, with a sigh, having hammered for an hour and more at the word '*good*,' which some foxhunting urchin, with his hands in his pockets, and a brassy confidence in his face, would spell '*dog*;'—'poor little boy,' the giant schoolmaster would exclaim, 'it is not your fault, poor heart! no, it is the dark, dreadful world you have come from!' It is a sad thing to think of," said the Hermit, "yet are there many, many pupils, growing hoary, and still misspelling '*good*,' nay, dying, and still unable to master that easy monosyllable. For I know not how many hundred years King Arthur there, in the preparatory school of Turveytop, has been sulking with his thumb in his mouth, still spelling '*b-l-o-o-d*' for '*good*.' The last time I saw him he had on a dunce's paper cap, made out of a poem written in this world to his especial honour."

"And King Arthur, and King Sebastian, too,—you have talked with them in Turveytop?" we cried.

"Most certainly," said the Hermit.

"And Numa Pompilius?"—

"And Joanna Southcote," said the Sage.

"Is it possible?" we exclaimed. "Joanna Southcote! Then she is not dead? That is, she will keep her word, and come back to us?"

"And open a baby-linen warehouse," said the Hermit.

"And, sir, these Turveytopians? What of their government—their laws, and customs?"

"Of such matters know I nothing," said the Hermit, "save that the schoolmasters were, so to speak, the nobility of the people. We scholars, spirited from the outside world to be brought up and taught in all things anew, were confined to the nursery, the school-room, and play-grounds. Indeed, save that the benevolence of our masters was more remarkable than in the teachers of dancing-dogs, they seemed to look upon us as inferior creatures, that might, with time and pains, be taught some tricks of humanity—that possibly, by a sojourn in Turveytop, might be made less mischievous to one another when sent back to the world we were taken from. Hence, I saw but little of the political and social condition of Turveytop. There ran a legend that, many hundred years ago, there arose a civil war in the land, which was ended in a way it would be pleasant to see imitated."

"How, sir?" we asked.

"Why, the two parties had armed themselves with swords and spears, and battle-axes—things unknown till then—and guns and cannon, and all the devilry which laurels come of. Thus armed, the divided people took the field. The opposing chiefs had marked their ground, and every man rubbed his hands—for the Turveytopians were, for the time, frantic with malice—at the sweet thought of chopping his neighbour through the skull, whilst those birds of glory, the vultures, were already cock-a-whoop for human flesh. Now, at that time the Turveytopians worshipped, among other divinities, a certain God of Laughter. I know not that such was his name; but mirth, loud, reckless, rollicking mirth, was his high attribute. This god had of late been much neglected. The Turveytopians—having their hearts filled with rancour, and in the drunkenness of their wrath yearning for nought but blood and wounds—had wickedly neglected the service of their beneficent *Numen*. Oh, glorious laughter!" cried the sage of Bellyfulle, falling back in his chair, and turning his broad shining face upwards, whilst his eyes twinkled benignly, and his lips seemed trembling with a jest—"thou man-loving spirit, that for a time dost take the burden from the weary back—that dost lay salve to the feet, bruised and cut by flints and shards—that takest blood-baking melancholy by the nose, and makest it grin despite itself—that all the sorrows of the past, the doubts of the future, confoundest in the joy of the present—that makest man truly philosophic—conqueror of himself and care! What was talked of as the golden chain of Jove, was nothing but a succession of laughs, a chromatic scale of merriment, reaching from earth to Olympus. It is not true that Prometheus stole the fire, but the laughter of the gods, to deify our clay, and in the abundance of our merriment, to make us reasonable creatures. Have you ever considered, sir, what man would be, destitute of the ennobling faculty of laughter? Why, sir, laughter is to the face of man—what sinovia, I think anatomists call it, is to his joints:—it oils, and lubricates, and makes the human countenance divine. Without it, our faces would have been rigid, hyæna-like; the iniquities of our heart, with no sweet antidote to work upon them, would have made the face of the best among us a horrid, husky thing, with two sullen, hungry, cruel lights at the top—for foreheads would have then gone out of fashion—and a cavernous hole below the nose. Think of a babe without laughter; as it is, its first intelligence! The creature shows the divinity of its origin and end, by smiling upon us: yes, smiles are its first talk with the world, smiles the first answers that it understands. And then, as worldly wisdom comes upon the little thing, it crows, it chuckles, it grins, and shaking in its nurse's arms, or in waggish humour playing bo-peep with the breast, it reveals its high destiny—declares, to him with ears to hear it, the heirdom of its immortality. Let materialists blaspheme as gingerly and as acutely as they will, they must find confusion in laughter. Man may take a triumphant stand upon his broad grins; for he looks around the world, and his innermost soul, sweetly tickled with the knowledge, tells him that he alone of all creatures laughs. Imagine, if you can, a laughing fish. Let man then send a loud ha! ha! through the universe, and be reverently grateful for the privilege."

"And the Turveytopians, you say, sir, had their God of Laughter?"

"And, from what I could gather, he held a most exalted place in their Pantheon. Sweet, too, especially sweet, was one of their customs of sacrifice. It was this. A man always dedicated his first joke, whatever it might be, to the God of Laughter. There was a fine spirit of gratitude in the practice, a sweet acknowledgment of the honied uses of mirth in this our daily draught of life, otherwise cold, flatulent, and bitter. This first offering was always a matter of great solemnity. The maker of the joke, whether man or maid, was taken in pompous procession to the shrine of the god. And there, the joke—beautifully worked in letters of gold upon some rich-coloured silk or velvet—was given in to the *flamen*, who read it to the assembled people, who roared approving laughter. The joker was then taken back in triumph to his house, and feasting and sports for nine days marked this his first act of citizenship; for I should tell you that no jokeless man could claim any civil rights. Hence, when the man began to joke, he was considered fit for the gravest offices of human government; and not till then."

"What! no civil rights? Had he no vote—if indeed there were votes in Turveytop—for his representative in the Senate? —for"—

"Sir," replied the Hermit, gravely, "he had no voice in anything; not even in the making of a beadle. The man without a joke in Turveytop was a wretch, an outcast; indeed, to give you the strongest, the truest comparison, he was what your man in England is, without a guinea."

"Miserable wretch!" we cried. "And what became of these creatures?"

"As I learned, the jokeless did all the foul and menial work. Miserable men, indeed! I have heard of a country in which the social dignity and moral intelligence of the man were computed by the soap he was wont to outlay upon his anatomy. He might be too poor to buy the soap; never mind that; it was a terrible thing, and stung the penniless offender like a nettle, to call him 'the unwashed!' Now, in Turveytop, it amounted to the same degree of ignominy to call a man the jokeless. Some of these might be in tatters and starving; well, they would ask charity, and how? They would say nothing of rags and hunger, but stopping the rich, they would despairingly slap the forehead, and in a hollow voice, cry 'No joke!' Thus, in those days of Turveytop, jokes gave dignity to the highest offices of the state. Senators and magistrates thought of nothing but making a joke of their functions and reputation. They had their great reward not only in the admiration of the people, but in the high degree of mental expression and physical beauty which their genius, constantly exercised, inevitably awarded them."

"Have jokes such benign power upon their makers?" we asked.

"Unquestionably," answered the Hermit, startled at the question. "Take a sulky fellow, with a brow ever wrinkled at the laughing hours. let them laugh never so melodiously—who looks with a death's head at the pleasant fruits of the earth heaped upon his table—who leaves his house for business as an ogre leaves his cave for food—who returns home joyless and grim to his silent wife and creeping children,—take such a man, and, if possible, teach him to joke. Why, sir, 'twould be like turning a mandril into an Apollo. A hearty jest kills an ugly face. The divine nature of man irradiates and ennobles what at first sight seems wholly animal. What a mighty joker was Socrates! Yes, joker, sir; and rightly have the sculptors imagined that knotty countenance, sublimed and sweetened by the laughing spirit within. Now, the jokeless of Turveytop—as it was related to me—became physically forlorn; the sympathy of mind and flesh was so active. Hence, they were drudges, scavengers, bone-grubbers, pickers-up of old rags and iron, bearers of burdens, outcasts, miserable creatures; the jokers all the while sitting high in place, their cheeks greasy with the marrow of the earth, their eyes twinkling with its nectar."

"Strange, indeed!" we cried.

"Ay, sir," said the Hermit, "for there are places in which, nine times out of ten, your joker is the lean drudge, and the dull fellow has the pot-belly, the purple nose, and the full purse."

"And now, sir, for the civil war in Turveytop? You say it was pleasantly ended?"

"In this fashion," said the Hermit, "if I have heard the legend truly. The two armies, in high conceit with their murderous weapons—for until that time there had been no men-killing engines known in Turveytop—lusted for the fight. Now, sir, you have heard or read of the vast concern shown by the gods of the heathen in the battles of their favourite soldiers,—as if, for instance, you and I should have pet emmets in the bloody struggle for an ear of barley. Indeed, whether or no, man *will* make his gods shoulder the knapsack with him: he will make them enter the breach, fire the town, clap a ready hand upon movables; knock a wayward householder on the head, and after, take enjoyment in the cellar, the larder, and the chamber. Man will, as I say, take his gods campaigning with him; and, sir, it must be owned, scurvy treatment they oftimes meet with at his hands. When he has laboured profitably in the bloody harvest, he gives them money for their good-will and support; and, alas, poor gods! with swaggering, blaspheming impudence, thanks them for his good fortune in robbery and slaughter. To hear of certain thanksgivings for successful battle, should we not believe that the devil had made *his* Adam,

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and that the slaughtered creatures were children of the demon handiwork, begotten by the evil principle, to be zealously attacked and butchered by the progeny of him who walked and talked with God in Paradise? It would seem thus; but it is not so. No, we are children of one Father, and when we have killed some thousand brethren or so, why, with unwashed hands and demure faces, we thank God for his good help in the fratricide. In the outside world of brazen brows, there is no impudence like the impudence of what men will call religion."

"Still, sir," we urged, "you wander from the battle of Turveytop."

"Right: to wander is a besetting sin of mine. Keep we now to the story. Well, sir, the two armies were about to fight, when the God of Joking—whose shrine had been sadly despised and neglected in preparation for the war—resolved to put an end to the wickedness, and so to bring the Turveytopians back again to jests and reason. Whereupon, as the story runs, the God Jocus repaired to a high hill near the battle-field, and seating himself cross-legged on its summit, called his thousands of servants about him, giving them due orders for their goodly work. The god surveyed the hosts below him with a wan smile, and then clapping his hands to his sides, he laughed a laugh of thunder. On this, the trumpets brayed once, and once only, and the armies engaged. In a moment the god saw that his sprites—there were immortal thousands, though born of human brains—had done his wise behest. There was no smoke—no fire. The great guns were dumb—the muskets undischarged; for be it known to you, sir, that the Turveytopians had at the time all the weapons since invented in our miniature world. Then you might have seen the soldiers charge, and their brittle bayonets break harmless against the bellies of the foes: then would some seize their weapons, and with the butt-end strike the enemy in the teeth. And the enemy stood and licked their lips. Wherefore, you will ask? I will tell you. The musket-stock was no longer walnut-wood; but, by the benignity of the great God Jocus, a thing of savoury sausage-meat, calling up the spirit of enjoyment in the heart of man, as it smote his nostril. In this way, sir, all things were changed. Here you would see a soldier take a cartridge from his box, and with bloody and sepulchral looks bite the cartridge-end. At that moment the face changed to sweetness and content; for, the cartridge bitten, a delicious cordial flowed into the mouth of the biter, and winding about his stony heart, melted it into human jelly. Here you would see a grenadier sucking a bayonet, as a nursling sucks a lollipop; and wherefore?—The great God Jocus had turned the deadly weapon into sugar-candy. In another place you might behold the small drums turned into pots of jelly, and the little drummer-boys eating therefrom, and painting their downy faces with raspberry and currant of more than martial red. Big drums took the shape and flavour of rounds of beef; and in a thought, the kettles were buffaloes' dried humps. The pioneers' caps became wine-coolers, and their aprons napkins of damask. Grey-headed officers swallowed their own swords, turned into macaroni. A cymbal-player was seen to devour his cymbals, suddenly changed into ratafia paste. What had been gunpowder was eaten by the handful as small saccharine comfits; cartridge-bullets were candied plums, and gave great pleasure both to horse and foot. Well, sir, it is not to be thought that discipline could survive temptation such as this. No, sir: at first there was vast astonishment; then a low murmur of delight ran through either host; then there was a mighty smacking of lips; and then the opposing armies laughed a tremendous laugh, and embraced. On this a solemn cacchination escaped the great God Jocus, who, uncrossing his legs, vanished. The news flew among the women of Turveytop, who, coming and bringing their children to the field, made merry with the army. A banquet was resolved upon; it was but rightful thanksgiving to the benevolent Jocus, whose noble practical jest had saved the blood of Turveytop; and more, had provided, yea, in the very engines of war, the wherewithal to comfort the bowels and rejoice the heart of man. The substance of dried meats was found in gun carriages; delicious cheeses were in the wheels; and pikes and halberts were nought more deadly than attenuated sausage, pungent and aromatic. The great guns, too—charged as it was thought with agony and death for thousands—contained nothing more mischievous than ruby wine. The cannon shot, turned to corks, were now withdrawn; and the armies ate and drank, and laughed and sang, and danced, and gave hearty thanks to the great God Jocus."

"And so the matter ended?"

"Even so, sir," replied the Hermit; "the field whereon the armies met was called, from that time, the Field of the Sage and Onions, the vegetables from that very day abounding there. And in memory of the time, the Turveytopians, in solemn procession, once a year gather of the produce to stuff their geese. You smile, sir. Think you, sir, it is not better to pull an onion than to pluck laurel? There are fewer tears drawn by homely scallion than by the green leaf."

"A strange freak, sir," we said, "of the God Jocus! It was at that we smiled."

"A strange, yet mighty benevolence!" cried the Hermit. "Would that he—or some kindred beneficence—could descend upon carnivorous war, when and wheresoever it should purpose to feed, and turn its carving sword to sugar!"

"And pray, sir," asked we of the Hermit, "by what chance did you escape from the land of Turveytop?"

"I was turned out in my sleep; yes, carried away in deep slumber; for, waking one morning, I found myself at the foot of the mountain, which, I know not how long before, had opened to receive me."

"Your soul made clean—your heart spotless, as when first touched into life, and it began beating towards the grave?"

"I am afraid so," said the Hermit, with a remorseful sigh.

"Afraid?"

"Ay, sir," said he, "much afraid; seeing how stained and grimy they have since become. Every man has not the happiness of a purification in Turveytop; therefore, should not enduring cleanliness be looked for from the lucky ones? And yet, sir, the very best of us soil, ay, sooner than a bride's riband."

For awhile we walked onward. "And now," said the Hermit, arriving at the edge of a lake, "do you perceive yonder island, diamond-shaped? It is very low at the edges upon the water, but rises into table-land, covered with green sward? That, sir, is the Isle of Jacks. 'Hallo,—boat!' And here, at the word, comes the boy who in yonder skiff shall carry us within eye-shot of the place, where we may see the inhabitants; for it is not permitted to any craft to run ashore; lest the people banished to the island, should seize the boat, and put to sea.

"A pretty boy, is he not? He is the son of a widow, a very fair and very wise woman, living round yonder point. Her husband was descended from a long line of captains—for the post was, for generations, held by the family—commanding the Duke de Bobs' sailing-yacht.

"It will be no news to you to be told that certain families have, for an age or so, been sent into the world with certain marks and gifts. One family bears away a particular nose from all the other families of the earth—another holds the patent of a certain pair of lips. Another has the whitest hand and the lightest finger. Now the family—whereof the head was ever the reigning Duke's sailing-captain—had an especial gift, whereby to recommend its chief. This boy, the sole-surviving of the line, inherits the quality that made his ancestors famous; but as the present Duke de Bobs cannot abide the water—the state sailing-yacht, put out of commission, and drawn high and dry, has been given to the widow and her son for a place of habitation.

"We are in the boat. And now, sir, observe the boy. The skiff, you perceive, has neither sail nor oar; and yet the boy inheriting the first gift of his race, will carry the craft where you will, by means of his cloak—an extraordinary garment; for the wearer has but to shift it, now to the one shoulder, now to the other, and, let the wind blow as it will, he makes it fair wind to him, sailing where he lists. Look at him! How complacently he sits trimming his garment; and how the skiff skims along, the water seething and singing as the bark cuts through it! Well, sir, this cloak has been in the boy's family time out of mind, and until the present day has ever been a fortune to the wearer, making him, by virtue of its marvellous quality, the court pilot and captain. But, as we have said, the present Duke de Bobs has forsworn the sea; and the poor boy, denied the favour of the court, is compelled to turn his cloak at the lowest price for humble passengers, no richer than ourselves.

"Certainly,—you are right. That anxious glance of yours at yonder black cloud—no bigger than a raven's wing—fears a coming hurricane. Let it blow. The boy will put on his storm-jacket, and defy it. A jacket of patches, in which every wind, from every point of the compass, is carefully sewn up. This garment the boy also inherits from his ancestors, some of whom, when the world was yet in its teens, intermarried with certain of the Lapland nobility; the patched jacket coming of the female side.

"And now—for the cloud is melting into the blue—we are pleasantly approaching the Isle of Jacks; for the wind, a delicious breeze, sits full in the back of the boy's cloak, adroitly trimmed to catch every gust of it. Poor lad! That cloak, cut into shreds and sold piecemeal in some places, would make the boy a golden fortune. How many a man would give all his substance to purchase even as much of the web as would make him a garter! But there are no such cloaks—not a remnant of them—to be had in the outside world; and if there were, we question if men would be found with grace sufficient to properly carry them.

"The boy has shifted his cloak, and we now sail along the island. Take this telescope. The beach has a dull and rusty look. You would think it the shore of Styx. Listen: how the pebbles chink and rattle, stirred by the waters! They are not pebbles. They are gold, and silver, and copper coin; worthless metal to the forlorn islanders, banished hither for the fraud of avarice. For you must know that the Isle of Jacks is a penal settlement for female offenders who, from all parts of the world —but especially from the most civilised corners—are condemned for a few hundred years to dwell here, the slaves of four masters. The history of one captive may serve for the rest. The culprits live in continual dread; for they inhabit paste-board huts, so loosely, so ticklishly put together, that every wind that blows scares the tenants with the horrid apprehension that they will be buried beneath a heap of ruins. But, as we have said, take the history of one offender as a sample of the story of all.

"Do you see yonder woman crossing a bridge; the bridge itself shaped like a cribbage-board; with large holes in it? She carries a child: of course: all the captives carry children in the Isle of Jacks. You may observe how gingerly the woman walks, as though she feared to drop through one of the many holes with which the bridge is pierced; drop into the brook beneath. That woman was—but no; even at this time we will spare the feelings of an honourable family, whose griffins at the present hour bear so very smug and confident a look in the Peerage. We will not disclose the offender's name: but, as a terrible moral warning to all people in her station, we hesitate not to declare that that offender was Maid-of-honour to Queen Anne. Poor thing! There is a very handsome monument to her memory in the village church of Ruff-cum-Tucker. Alas! how little do her descendants dream that their hooped and powdered great-great-grandmother is at this moment nursing little Jacks of Clubs for future card-tables.

"However, let us proceed with her tragic history. The young lady was one night engaged at cards at St. James's Palace. By some means, the Jack of Clubs had crept to her bosom; and she was rudely challenged by another maid—her opponent at the game—with harbouring the absent card. It may be believed that a Maid-of-honour, so accused, was a kindled flame. Her eyes would have withered any other but a female rival; for tender women stand the fire of women, and are never hurt by it; whilst braggart man is often smitten into ashes by the sudden flash. Our maid barbed her tongue with all sorts of stinging syllables, vowing—with the Jack at her heaving breast —that she knew nothing of his whereabout. A gentleman would have bowed at once, and been convinced: but sister woman is not so easily cozened by her own sex. At last, our maid, taunted to desperation, clenched her little fist, and bringing it down with force upon the mahogany—(Cupid gasped, and felt his own heart bruised as that little hand smote and was smitten by the unyielding wood!)—she cried with a shriek that 'if she knew anything about the Jack of Clubs, she wished she might have the Jack for her husband!' With this terrible aspiration. all affected satisfaction at the least; and our maid kept a snow-white reputation, marrying only a year after, either the Gold or Silver Stick of Queen Anne's court; a nobleman next to the Queen, and of course very far from a knave.

"The maid, it is true, married and clung to the stick aforesaid; but the Jack of Clubs was in no way to be cheated: for when the woman died she became his wife, in this Island of Jacks, wherein the Jack of Clubs and his three brethren have equal rule. And if when abroad, their children are generally opposing one another,—their fathers seem for such reason, to be all the closer friends here in their island home. And so they govern their hundreds of wives; for they have no fewer number, all of them supplied in the persons of women who during mortal life have fobbed and cheated, or wasted the money of their husbands, or the time of their families, at cards.

"And what is worse for the poor creatures—the card-players doomed to the Isle of Jacks—their children are continually torn from them: spirited away; sent into the common world, stretched by some wicked magic upon pasteboard, to tempt other sinners. There is not, throughout the whole world, a single Jack—whether turned up in palace or pot-house—that was not born in this island; the child of one of the King Jacks who rule the place; and who thus cruelly incorporate their own flesh and blood in pasteboard. But what will not even human creatures do, who will give all their hearts and all their souls to cards? Nevertheless, sir, you must own it is hard upon the poor females. Turn your glass a little this way. There are half-a-dozen women, all wives of the Jack of Diamonds. Each of them has three or four little Jacks at her apron, and each two in her arms. And they have borne and nursed the little knaves; and have suffered their heart-strings to wind and wind about them, and yet they know not one hour from the next when they may not be deprived of their offspring. And what is worse,—the poor creatures are now nimbly alive to the mischief that their children will inflict upon the world when sent into it. Why, sir, it is a frequent matter—albeit all unknown to the sufferer in the common world—for a great-great-grandson at a London Club to be ruined by the knave, the son by her second marriage—if, indeed, it is permitted to call it so—of his great-great-grandmother in the Isle of Jacks. And this the wretched women know; and so their sufferings as mothers deprived of their children, are made worse by the remorse they feel to furnish their flesh and blood by descent, with temptation that trips them into the pit of ruin.

"And now, sir, you may probably guess wherefore the beach is heaped with gold, and silver, and even copper coin. It is, that the poor women may be teazed to see about them the worthlessness of that, which, out of very idleness for the most part, they played and cheated for when upon the earth.

"It would amaze you to know the real names and dignities of women who, in your world, have shone like stars, and have reigned like goddesses and queens, and who are now living in worse than simple bondage in this Isle of Jacks,—the slaves and mistresses of the poor tyrants, who rule the place, and who, with —so to speak—their own flesh and blood, people our earth with instruments of mischief. We have told you, that every Jack of every pack of cards is born on this island; and when his heels are paid for, as they often are, in the tap-room, how little is it thought that he may have—on the mother's side at least—the brightest royal paint about him.

"Where the kings and queens, who, with Jacks and aces, make up the court of cards—where they are made, we have not, we confess it, yet discovered. But we doubt not that their birth is equally strange with that of the children of the Isle of Jacks. And then—for this we thought not of before—and then it must beat even the natural love of a mother, to love those baby knaves; squint-eyed, square-cheeked, bold-faced varlets, with after all, such ingenuous looks, that they look all the mischief that is within them.

"And now, sir, we have sailed round the island—for we are not permitted to land, and for ourselves, we would not if we might,—and the boy, trimming his cloak, alters his course. Meanwhile, think of the Isle of Jacks; and remembering the hard condition of the females captive there, with their frequent travail and their frequent loss, confess that the sins of the gamester may come down with increased mischief upon succeeding generations.

"Boy," cried the Hermit, "shift your cloak, if you please, and steer for Honeybee Bay. A good lad. Now it bares upon us. With what open arms the shore stands before us! And you perceive with what gentle undulations its green bosom rises from the water. This place is, perhaps, the most delicious spot of all Clovernook. Here the water is ever bright and rippling; the wind fresh and nimble—never boisterous or keen. Here every day myriads of flowers open their eyes, and breathe their sweetness to the sun; and here they pass away like dew exhaled, leaving no leaf decayed, no blossom withered to tell a tale of death. And upon the shore are beautiful shells, red-lipped as Venus, and voiced with wondrous singing. Place one of them to your ear, and its voice will call up in your breast all the long mute music of your early days, when life dreamt not of hope, the present was so full of happiness. The shell will sing to you sweet familiar sounds of the past, blended with tones that harmonise, and yet are richer, sweeter, deeper, than the air departed ; as though some higher spirit caught the dying strain continuing it in more melodious volume.

"And now the boat skims in between the sharp-edged stones—like a sea-bird to its cleft—and the craft still in deep water, we tread the causeway built in lucky sport by the tritons, when, by moonlight and roaring laughter, they hurled the fragments at one another. How ripe and rich with colour—with hues that warm the heart—is this pillar of rock ; the world's almanac, with ages in it, printed after ages ; Time, solemn in the granite of a dead world, yet wearing on his sunny brow the flowers of the morning.

"And now, sir, sit down ; for we must question you before we climb the hill. To day, of all days, is the great festival of the Twenty-five Club. As a stranger to Clovernook, you may be permitted to witness the festivity. For, be it known to you, that the Club contains only a chosen number : a few of the Club, tried and purified, ere they are permitted to join the body. And yet there are but two questions—though they may be made, like a vine, to shoot out into branches innumerable — two questions to be satisfied, and the candidate is admitted to the fullest honours of the fraternity. The two questions are these :—

"'Are you older than five-and-twenty ?

"'Will you ever, forgetful of what you owe to yourself, and to the beauty, and benevolence, and everlasting spirit of nature,—will you ever, wantonly, ignobly, and most foolishly consent to become more than five-and-twenty,—even though your face should be wrinkled like wind-blown water, your hair white as the surging sea ?'

"Now, sir, these seem easy questions to answer : but deeply considered, they require a strong, an earnest, aye and happy man, to reply to them with a bold, conscientious *yes*. And let us not speak only of men, but of women. Poor souls ! It is much to be doubted whether the queries are not even more difficult to them to respond to assuringly. Yet taken literally, certainly not. And for this good reason :—

"Eve it is well-known was sixteen years old when she was awakened at the side of her husband. Sixteen years old, say ancient writers ; and that so boldly, that they must have seen Eve's register written on the lilies of Paradise. Now women—

who have nine times out of ten more curious rabbinical learning than the mean envy of our sex will allow to them—women, inheriting the privilege from their first parent believe that, after a certain time, they have a just right to let their first sixteen years go for nothing: and so they sink the preliminary sixteen with a smile, counting with mother Eve their seventeenth as their first real birth-day. And they are right. For it deducts from your woman of five-and-forty all that she cares to lose, giving her a fair start with Eve, and pegging her back to full-blown nine and twenty. And indeed, it is impossible that any really charming woman should be a day older.

"Hark! there! the music. The flutes and the tambourines, and the fiddles. Hush! Do you hear the chorus? The voices are thin, and sharp, and shake a little, but there is rejoicing heart in all of them. And now, we have no time to talk the preface we intended; for a new candidate is to be elected into the club and—for ourselves, we have long been an honorary member—and we must lose no moment if we would not lose the ceremony."

And climbing the ascent, we wound along paths skirted and hung with sweet-smelling shrubs and flowers, orange-trees and heliotropes, and the friendly honey-suckle, sweet type of amity, clinging that it may comfort with its sweetness—and jasmine, with starry eyes shining through sober green.—And as we walked, the herbs crushed by our feet sighed forth their odorous breath, returning good for injury.

At length we came into an open space; and there was the verdant living temple of holly, and laurel, and cedar, and all the shrubs and trees that dare the winter with unfading leaves still green beneath, though piled and heaped with snow. At the foot of a cedar, chief pillar of the temple, a fountain leaped from the earth, and ran adown the mount; but still it ran perpetually bright, perpetually young, until it mingled with the universal sea.

As we entered upon the level ground, the procession, winding downwards, approached us. There were some fifty men, and about five-and-twenty women. To take their faces, and turn them to the light, and cogitate deeply the lines marked upon them by Time, there was not a face that would have passed for a day younger than forty (though be it known, we do not always trust to the seeming marks of Time, knowing that, like an unjust tapster he is now and then apt to score double). Again, there were other faces, embrowned by sixty harvest times at least. All the men and women were clothed in drapery of gayest colours; and all carried flowers in their hands, and wore chaplets of amaranth about their heads.

Four men carried in a litter of palm-leaves the new candidate for the Twenty-five Club. To speak arithmetically, he was sixty years old at least; but spiritually—and you cannot hamper spirit with figures, remember that, sir, and defy addition—spiritually he was, as his examination afterwards proved, no more than five-and-twenty: and at five-and-twenty he vowed to stay.

The neophyte was dressed in a sky-blue robe, with a garland of ivy about his snow-white head. When he arose from the litter, it was to be observed that he limped with an old sciatica—nevertheless, with its fangs in his nerves, he would only be five-and-twenty.

The President of the Club—he was always elected President who had been longest five-and-twenty—put the two questions rehearsed above to the candidate, and was satisfactorily answered: the tambourines, and the flutes, and the fiddles sounding blithe accompaniment as the *yes* was uttered.

And then two of the club, bearing in separate baskets, fruits and flowers; and a third carrying in a crystal cup water from the leaping fountain, approached the candidate; and then the President, addressing him in a pleasant voice, said these words:—

"You promise—and especially promise from this day—never to grow a day older than the days that make five-and-twenty years, the only reasonable time of life of man?

"This you promise, that your eyes may still behold the same beauty in the stars? That your heart may still beat with the rising sun, and melt when he is setting in his tent of glory?

"This you promise, that you may have eyes and ears for the world of beauty and gladness that encompasses you; no beauty fading, no sound of gladness growing dumb?

"By the ever-springing loveliness of flowers—by the ever-sounding music of the birds—by the rivers and fountains—by harvest-time, and by the season of fruits,—you promise to remain spiritually fixed at five-and-twenty?"

"I promise," said the candidate. And as he spoke, he laid his hands upon the fruits and flowers, and emptied the crystal goblet to solemnise the compact.

"Be ever stedfast, and be ever five-and-twenty," said the President. "The eyes fail; the back bows, the hair is whitened; youth departs from every joint and every organ—but the heart, if the owner wills it—the heart is ever young."

"It must be confessed, sir," said we to the Hermit, "a great privilege this to be of the fraternity of the Twenty-five Club. And is it not a pity that, with so many millions of men upon the earth, there are so few—such is the perverseness of the human animal—so very few eligible to the brotherhood?"

The Hermit smiled, waved his hand, and said: "As you have beheld this most pleasant ceremony, we will leave the Club to enjoy its constitutional good humour; for—we have kept the secret until now, to enjoy the pleasure of the surprise—we have an invitation for you. There is a feast, a birth-day feast, afoot; and as our friend, you will find cup and trencher and hearty welcome at the board. To-day, sir, Maximus Mouse, a sort of magistrate of Clovernook, celebrates one of the two birth-days—called the Birth-days of the Ghosts—held in great solemnity among the town's folk. Two birth-days, sir; and they fall when the man reaches the top of the hill of life—forty; and again when he has descended the other side, should he indeed get so low—fourscore.

"Half-an-hour's walk, and we arrive at Mouse-Hall. In a few minutes, and you catch it shining through the trees: a hospitable beacon on a round, green mount. Your nose, sharpened by the fresh air, may even here smell the odours of the good cheer wafted from the hall and kitchen. Yes: they are not to be mistaken—they come thicker and thicker upon us. Unseen envoys from chine and pasty and unstopped flask, to coax travellers by the nose to come and eat and drink! Mend your pace, sir: very good. For here is Mouse Hall.

"Folks in their best attire, and wearing their most satisfied looks, stream in at the door. That man—with a mild, grave face—drest in black, is Maximus Mouse. Poor fellow! He is about to entertain a strange sort of guests; and now and then, a wan and anxious smile pulling at the corners of his mouth, betrays his inward trouble. No man throughout Clovernook is more respected than Maximus Mouse: and yet—punctilious creature!—he may at this moment accuse himself of many self-known shortcomings that make him blush for the good opinion he has stolen for himself from the easiness of his fellow-townsmen. We do not boldly aver that it is so. Nevertheless it may be so. For who shall say, when applauding shouts break in thunder about some human idol; who shall say, that a voice, a thin hissing voice of self-reproach, does not turn to burning mockery the idolatry of the worshippers?

"Maximus still stands at the door-way—it is the custom of the place—and greets every visitor. Let us push for the door-step.

"We told you that, as our friend, the master of the Hall would give you hearty welcome, and you have had it. The reception room is fairly crammed. Hush! That, sir, is the dinner-bell. And now, we must fall in with the procession, to escort the host to the banquet. Such is the fashion at such times. Let us keep close, side by side.

"The host has entered the banqueting-room; and now, you perceive, that venerable man—he is the eldest of the guests—locks the door from the outside, and puts the key in his pocket. And now, you see that all the guests prepare to leave the house. Take our arm, and when we have reached the road, we will duly answer your looks of questioning wonder. Here we are. Now you shall be satisfied.

"Maximus Mouse is to-day forty years old, and is at the present moment entertaining nine-and-thirty guests. Unbidden guests; who whether he would or not, seat themselves at his board this day, and look—ay sir, there it is, who shall say how they look?—upon the feast-giver.

"For these nine-and-thirty guests are the Ghosts of the Nine-and-Thirty Birth-Days of the host: the birth-days past into the sepulchre of time, but rendered up for this day's awful festival—meeting their fortieth brother. At this moment, sir, Maximus Mouse is set about by all the shadows of his departed years.

"On his right hand, innocent and beautiful, sits and smiles the Ghost of his First Year: the spectre of the Twentieth faces him from the bottom of the table, and the shade of the Thirty-Ninth shoulders him close on the left. Is not this a solemn array of guests?

"We know not how Maximus may meet the ghosts. Let us hope that, albeit, he may look sorrowfully, sheepishly, in the faces of some few, he may smile, and with cheerful looks, acknowledge the recollections of the greater number. We may not judge him for himself; but we may ponder the solemnity of such a gathering.

"Look at the host—the man of forty. With what regretful love, with what wondering tenderness, he gazes at the babe at his right hand, the Twelvemonth Self. And that was he! And then his eye passes rapidly adown the file, saddening as it glances. And then he turns again to that bud of life upon his right, and sighs and smiles. And so along the table, watching that opening bud, unclosing in the Second, Third, Fourth, Sixth, Eighth, enlarging guest. And at the Ninth or Tenth again he pauses; for one of them may be the early time-mark between the happy thoughtlessness of childhood, and the sudden shadow of too early care. And the Eleventh Shadow—even the Eleventh—is pinched and thin, and worn; it has a look of early knowledge taught by sordid teachers. And the look deepens and darkens from neighbour to neighbour. But the Eighteenth Ghost has a look of wisdom that defies the gathered experience of all mankind. It knows everything, and has never cared to study for it. The knowledge has come to it unsought, unasked, like the colour of its hair, the tint of its skin. And so, the Eighteenth Ghost, erect, and with crossed arms, head aloof, and lifted nostril, sits armed in mailed proof of its own conceit. The host—the man of Forty—shakes his head, perhaps lightly laughs, and still—still glances down the table. The Nineteenth, Twentieth Ghost differ little from their Eighteenth neighbour; though to scan them the closer—the look may be a little less assured.

"Twenty-One sits, dilated, with a flush of triumph on its brow. Though close to Twenty, in very truth, how far distant; and yet in Twenty-One, the host remembers things that Twenty-Two, and Twenty-Three, and Twenty-Four, sit the less easily, and look the less airily for the acting.

"And there is Twenty-Five! The host starts as he gazes on the year: a year blackened by falsehood, clouded with tears, and guilty of a broken heart; broken from too much trusting. The host groans, and with his hand clasping his brow, would shut out the sight, the recollection of that worse than felon year. But it cannot be. He must look down and up the table. He must, with a fixed eye, look upon the face of every dead year—every spectre guest.

"And the deed of Twenty-Five, though it shadowed not his immediate neighbours, was acknowledged by the host, darkening, at intervals, the following years; even to the nine-and-thirtieth.

"And thus the host looks in the face of every guest; and, as it may be, takes remorse or comfort from the dark or cheerful aspect of his passing table companions.

"And it is strange to think how sometimes the years on one side of the board may frown and scowl at the opposite guests, so much have the sad-looking ones endured from the folly, the idleness, the perverseness of their foregone brethren. Were they not guests, they would surely sometimes fall to buffets!

"You will allow, sir, that this sort of birth-day is a more solemn festival than any known in our frivolous and forgetful society? There, sir, men celebrate their birth-days as only so many victories over time, with not a recollection of the many good and gentle hopes and thoughts they may have wounded or destroyed in the battle. Now, in Clovernook twice at least in a man's life if he live the years, he is compelled to celebrate the return of his natal hour in the most solemn company that man can evoke from the past—that is, face to face, and eye to eye, with the ghosts of his birth-days.

How few of us, sir,—were the guests all willing to come—would be in haste to send down invitation cards to their dwelling-place, the World of Shades! How few would ask to such a banquet the Ghosts of our Birth-Days!

At this time the declining sun flamed goldenly in the west. It was a glorious hour. The air fell upon the heart like balm; the sky, gold and vermilion-flecked, hung, a celestial tent, above mortal man; and the fancy-quickened ear heard sweet, low music from the heart of earth, rejoicing in that time of gladness.

"Did ever God walk the earth in finer weather?" said the Hermit. "And how gloriously the earth manifests the grandeur of the Presence! How its blood dances and glows in the Splendour! It courses the trunks of trees, and is red and golden in their blossoms. It sparkles in the myriad flowers, consuming itself in sweetness. Every little earth-blossom is as an altar, burning incense. The heart of man, creative in its overflowing happiness, finds or makes a fellowship in all things. The birds have passing kindred with his winged thoughts. He hears a stranger, sweeter triumph in the skiey rapture of the lark, and the cuckoo—constant egoist!—speaks to him from the deep, distant wood, with a strange swooning sound. All things are living a part of him. In all, he sees and hears a new and deep significance. In that green pyramid, row above row, what a host of flowers! How beautiful and how rejoicing! What a sullen, soul-less thing, the Great Pyramid, to that blossoming chesnut! How different the work and workmen! A torrid monument of human wrong, haunted by flights of ghosts that not ten thousand thousand years can lay—a pulseless carcase built of sweat and blood to garner rottenness. And that Pyramid of leaves grew in its strength, like silent goodness, heaven blessing it: and every year it smiles, and every year it talks to fading generations. What a congregation of spirits—spirits of the season!—is gathered, circle above circle, in its blossoms; and verily they speak to man with blither voice, than all the tongues of Egypt. And at this delicious season, man listens and makes answer to them; alike to them and all: to the topmost blossom of the mighty tree as to the greensward daisy, constant flower, with innocent and open look still frankly staring at the mid-day sun."

"Evenings such as this," continued the Hermit, after a pause, "seem to me the very holiday time of death; an hour in which the slayer, throned in glory, smiles benevolently down on man. Here, on earth, he gets hard names among us for the unseemliness of his looks, and the cruelty of his doings; but in an hour like this, death seems to me loving and radiant,—a great bounty, spreading an immortal feast, and showing the glad dwelling-place he leads men to."

"It would be great happiness could we always think so. For so considered, death is indeed a solemn beneficence—a smiling liberator, turning a dungeon door upon immortal day. But when death, with slow and torturing device, hovers about his groaning prey; when, like a despot cunning in his malice, he makes disease and madness his dallying serfs"——

"Merciful God!" cried the Hermit, "spare me that final terror! Let me not be whipped and scourged by long, long suffering to death—be dragged, a shrieking victim, downward to the grave; but let my last hour be solemn, tranquil, that so, with open, unblenched eyes, I may look at coming death, and feel upon my cheek his kiss of peace!"

Thus spoke the Hermit, with passionate fervour. His mind seemed solemnly uplifted. We turned aside from him, following one of the many garden paths. After some minutes, the Hermit came up with us. He was again the cheerful, light-hearted anchorite. "What say you," said he, "to pass an hour or so at 'the Gratis?'"

"Where we shall meet the villagers of Clovernook?"

"Some of them, at least," said the Hermit. "I have not been there these three weeks. This way: we shall have time to stroll a round; there are some ruins—for Clovernook has its antiquities—I shall be glad to show you." The Hermit led the way from the garden, and with a few strides we found ourselves in a delicious green lane. "This," said he of Bellyfulle, "is called Velvet-path, and leads eastwardly to the village. What do you pause at?" asked the Hermit, as we suddenly stopped, listening to sheep-bells, that sounded at various distances, and in various notes, through the balmy air.

"The sheep-bells. How beautifully toned!" we said. "Of all rustic sounds, our favourite music."

"To me," said the Hermit, "the sheep-bell sounds of childhood; yea, of babyhood. In the world without us, it hath often been to me a solace and a sweetness. I had seen little of the green earth—knew, alas! how little of its softening loveliness, its beautiful records of God's tenderness to man in herbs and flowers, that in their beauty seem sown by angel hands for man's delight. Of these things I had little seen or known ; I was so early built up in the bricks of a city : otherwise, sir, harsh thoughts and foolish sneers, evil and folly begotten in a too-early, sordid strife with man, perhaps, had not defiled me. The sheep-bell was the one remembrance, the one thought still dwelling in my brain, and with its sometime music calling up a scene of rustic Sabbath quietude. Swelling meads in their soft greenness ; hedge-rows, and their sparkling flowers ; a row of chesnut trees in blossoming glory ; a park ; a flock of nibbling sheep—a child, the mute yet happy wonderer at all."

"And the scene charmed by the simple sheep-bell ?"

"Even now," said the Hermit, "it is in certain moods my best music. Many an evening have I seated myself on that mossy cushion, at the foot of yonder beech-tree, and leaning back with folded hands and closed eyes, have let my brain drink and drink its stilling sounds ; and I have gone off into day-dreams, heaven knows where. I have been in the holy East ; have heard the flocks of the Patriarchs, and seen Rebecca at the well."

Thus talking, we had proceeded half-way up Velvet-path, when a man in rustic dress, followed by a sheep-dog, came over a stile close upon us. He immediately paused, and taking off his hat, accosted the Hermit—"A blessed evening, this."

"All's well ?" asked the sage.

"All's well," answered the man. The Hermit smiled and bowed, and saying, "God be with you, Joseph," passed on.

"Who is he ?" we asked.

"My shepherd," answered the Hermit of Bellyfulle ; "and I would answer for it even upon parchment, as honest, simple a creature as a day-old lamb. Look at him ; I warrant me he is about to play his evening music to his dog."

It was even so ; for turning round we saw Joseph seated under a tree, vehemently twanging a Jew's-harp. "A strange instrument for a shepherd."

"He hath wonderful knowledge of that piece of iron," answered the Hermit; "nor is it strange it should be so. For twenty years it was, in the outside world, the constant companion of his lips."

"Indeed ! what was your shepherd, ere in happy hour he came to Clovernook ?"

"He was door-keeper to a sponging-house. Yes, he was the janitor ; the demon of the iron grill ; and would solace his darkness and captivity (for keeper of prisoners, he himself was the greatest,) with that vocal metal. Poor wretch ! That fourpenny harp was his comfort—his consolation—his blithe society."

"Is he not a Jew?" we asked.

"Yes; and served a Hebrew master," answered the Hermit, who smilingly added, "I knew the gentleman well."

"Pray, sir, has your philosophy discovered why, of all men, Jews—at first a pastoral, country-loving people—should delight to take service under the sheriff, so that they may carry away captive the spendthrift and the wretched, holding the human chattels under lock and key? Why, of all folks, should Jews delight to be bailiffs?"

"It may be," said the Hermit, "in memory and sweet revenge of the Egyptian bondage. Poor things! they still make bricks, too; ay, and brick houses; though the cruelty of modern law, I hear, denies them straw-bail."

"How earnestly the dog watches the musician's face!" we cried; for the animal, sitting upright, stared with contemplative looks at the shepherd. "We never saw more meaning in a cur's countenance."

"Strange things are told of that dog," said the Hermit. "Joseph insists upon it that the spirit of a London money-lender, an old acquaintance, animates Flip. You may be sure, sir, I have no such superstition, or would hardly trust my flocks within range of its teeth. Yet has the dog marvellous sagacity. Put a bad shilling among a hundred good ones, and Flip, with sensitive nostril, will detect the counterfeit. Many a man, sir, would think it impossible to earn higher praise. A fine, elevating gift, sir, that quick sense of bad money. I knew a man—poor fellow!—who bought the faculty at what you and I should think a great cost. It is an odd story, but true, sir—true as the stars. I call the tale the

Tragedy of the Till.

"A strange, household title," said we; "pray relate it."

"You would hardly think, sir, that the matter happened in London? In a mean, obscure street; a place where the hard realities of life knocked daily, hourly, at people's hearts? Where the men and women seemed only made to work, and eat, and sleep, and die; the unidea'd, moving things of the world, the mere biped furniture of the earth. And yet, sordid and barren as the spot may be, there is the restless spirit of man, yearning and struggling to deliver itself from the squalor that defiles it. See man, the natural monarch of the earth, styed like a hog. Why, even there, in chin-deep misery, visions will now and then glorify the habitation. The poetic spirit—for what is hope but the poetry of daily life?—will touch the coarsest soul that answers, like a harp-string to the wind, unconscious of the power that stirs it. Let this remembrance go with you, and you shall behold no place where man is mean or common. Take the thought with you in nooks and alleys, where the sweet air of heaven sickens with disease, and man seems not made of the earth of Paradise, but of city mud, a stark, foul, brutish thing; even there, man is glorified by his hopes, that, like angel-faces in a dungeon, brighten and beautify his prison. Let us imagine, sir," said the Hermit, letting his ivory staff fall in his arm, and leaning against a huge, sheltering sycamore—"let us imagine some city quarter, in which the inhabitants—miserable creatures! —should be bereaved of all hope. A little higher only would they be than apes. They would seem to us the lay-figures of humanity. We should behold their habitations with shuddering looks and shrinking nose, and hurry from the spot, as though fever and poverty clawed like demons at our skirts, to taint and ruin us. Any way, the dwellers of Hopeless Quarter would seem to us—dignified as we are by four meals a day, and with no rent in our coats, no crack in our shoe-leather—as forlorn animals, permitted on the earth for some mysterious purpose, but who, though something like ourselves in outward guise, had nothing else in common with us. Would not such be the belief of many of us?"

"It is more than likely," we answered.

"Why, sir," cried the Hermit, with a grave look, "it *is* our creed. Every street, lane, or alley that harbours the wretched poor is, to our gingerly apprehension, Hopeless Quarter. We wholly avoid it; or if otherwise, with our moral thumb and finger holding our moral nose, we hurry through it. We cast a rapid look at the forlorn inhabitants—a frightened glance in at doorways and adown cellars—and never for one brief minute think, that beneath that outward husk of humanity, that in those miserable abiding-places of mortal suffering, there is the aspect, and the earthly refuge of the future angel. Many a time, sir," said the Sage of Bellyfulle, "I have walked the streets, and day-dreaming, have fashioned to myself the doings, the hopes and cares of the householders. To my fancy, the brick walls of the houses have turned to glass, and I have seen all that passed inside. Well, I have been rarely rapt by what I have beheld in the palaces and mansions of the rich. There, human life, when at the purest and the best, is as a graceful nymph, whose slightest motion is silent music—whose look is sweet, intelligent serenity—whose breath is odorous as morning air. Beautiful is her speech; for she talks lilies and roses. There is an atmosphere about her that steals upon the heart, and lulls it into sweet placidity. But, sir, the heart knows not—or should not know—such dreamy rest at the doors of the very poor. No; its blood quickens and glows as it beholds the daily battle. There are the poor fighting with the world, that, like a huge machine set in motion by some necromantic wickedness, has action, speech, cunning, force tremendous, everything but heart. A mighty creature, bloodless and pulseless. Great are the odds against poverty in the strife. Alas! alas! how often is the poor man the compelled Quixote; made to attack a windmill in the hope that he may get a handful of the corn it grinds?"

"Even so," said we; "and many and grievous are his buffets ere the miller—the prosperous fellow with the golden thumb—rewards poor poverty for the unequal battle."

"There it is," cried the Hermit. "There is the heroism which, at the houses of the poor, has made me see and feel the majesty of poverty; has in my eyes made starveling spinners and weavers more than kingly. It is a fine show, a golden sight, to see the crowning of a king. I have beheld the ceremony; with undazzled eyes have well considered all its blaze of splendour. A tender thing to think of is the kiss of peace; beautiful the homage; heart-stirring the voice of the champion, when the brave knight dashes his defying gauntlet on the marble stone; very solemn the anointing, and most uplifting the song of jubilate when all is done. But, sir, to my coarse apprehension, I have seen a nobler sight than this, a grander ceremony, even at the hearthstone of the poor. I will show you a man, worn, spent; the bony outline of a human thing, with toil and want, cut, as with an iron tool, upon him; a man to whom the common pleasures of this our mortal heritage are unknown as the joys of Paradise. This man toils and starves, and starves and toils, even as the markets vary. Well, he keeps a heart, sound as oak, in his bosom. In the sanctity of his soul, bestows the kiss of peace upon a grudging world: he compels the homage of respect, and champions himself against the hardness of fortune. In his wretched homestead he is throned in the majesty of the affections. His suffering, patient, loving wife—his pale-faced, ill-clad children—are his queen and subjects. He is a king in heart, subduing and ruling the iron hours; unseen spirits of love and goodness anoint him; and, sir,"—said the Hermit, in solemn voice—"as surely as the kingdom of God is more than a fairy tale, so surely do God's angels sing that poor man's jubilate."

Here the Hermit paused; and then, grasping his staff, walked silently on. He seemed for a time brooding over new thoughts. At length he looked round with his sunny smile, and his eye twinkled again. "Depend upon it," he said, "you shall hear more of Joseph and his dog. Ay, there he is, still twanging to him. Poor fellow! when he kept the key of the bailiff's house, his chief company was the canary of the bailiff's wife. He would finger his Jew's-harp against the bird's flying notes, and I verily believe felt all the envy of a musical rival. The canary, with its shower of sounds, fairly smothered the Jew's-harp; and I believe Joseph, in tranquil despair, thought of hanging it upon the willow, when a cat chewed up the yellow songster. No singing woman ever hated a sister syren with greater zeal than did Joseph hate that canary."

"But, sir," we ventured to observe, "you have forgotten the story, or Tragedy of the Till."

"True," replied the Hermit. "It is a strange tale, but it hath the recommendation of brevity. Some folks may see nothing in it but the tricksiness of an extravagant spirit; and some, perchance, may pluck a heart of meaning out of it. However, be it as it may, you shall hear it, sir. There was a man called Isaac Pugwash, a dweller in a miserable slough of London, a squalid denizen of one of the foul nooks of that city of Plutus. He kept a shop; which, though small as a cabin, was visited as granary and store-house by half the neighbourhood. All the creature-comforts of the poor—from bread, to that questionable superfluity, small-beer—were sold by Isaac. Strange it was, that with such a trade, Pugwash grew not rich. He had many bad debts; and of all shopkeepers, was most unfortunate in false coin. Certain it is, he had neither eye nor ear for bad money. Counterfeit semblances of majesty beguiled him out of bread, and butter, and cheese, and red herring, just as readily as legitimate royalty struck at the Mint. Malice might impute something of this to the political principles of Pugwash, who, as he had avowed himself again and again, was no lover of a monarchy. Nevertheless, I cannot think Pugwash had so little regard for the countenance of majesty, as to welcome it as readily when silvered copper as when sterling silver. No, a wild, foolish enthusiast was Pugwash, but in the household matter of good and bad money he had very wholesome prejudices. He had a reasonable wish to grow rich, yet was entirely ignorant of the by-ways and short-cuts to wealth. He would have sauntered through life with his hands in his pockets, and a daisy in his mouth; and dying with just enough in his house to pay the undertaker, would have thought himself a fortunate fellow; he was, in the words of Mrs. Pugwash, such a careless, foolish, dreaming creature. He was cheated every hour by a customer of some kind; and yet to deny credit to any body—he would as soon have denied the wife of his bosom. His customers knew the weakness, and failed not to exercise it. To be sure now and then, fresh from conjugal counsel, he would refuse to add a single herring to a debtor's score ; no, he would not be sent to the workhouse by any body. A quarter of an hour after, the denied herring, with an added small loaf, was given to the little girl, sent to the shop by the rejected mother,—'he couldn't bear to see poor children wanting anything.'

"Pugwash had another unprofitable weakness. He was fond of what he called nature, though in his dim, close shop, he could give her but a stifling welcome. Nevertheless, he had the earliest primroses on his counter,—'they threw,' he said, 'such a nice light about the place.' A sly, knavish customer presented Isaac with a pot of polyanthuses and, won by the flowery gift, Pugwash gave the donor ruinous credit. The man with wallflowers regularly stopt at Isaac's shop, and for only sixpence, Pugwash would tell his wife he had made the place a Paradise. 'If we can't go to nature, Sally, isn't it a pleasant thing to be able to bring nature to us ?' Whereupon Mrs. Pugwash would declare, that a man with at least three children to provide for had no need to talk of nature. Nevertheless, the flower-man made his weekly call. Though at many a house, the penny could not every week be spared to buy a hint, a look of nature for the darkened dwellers, Isaac, despite of Mrs. Pugwash, always purchased. It is a common thing, an old familiar cry," said the Hermit—"to see the poor man's florist, to hear his loud-voiced invitation to take his nosegays, his penny-roots ; and yet is it a call, a conjuration of the heart of man overlaboured and desponding—walled in by the gloom of a town—divorced from the fields and their sweet healthful influences—almost shut out from the sky that reeks in vapour over him ;—it is a call that tells him there are things of the earth beside food and covering to live for ; and that God in his great bounty hath made them for all men. Is it not so ?" asked the Hermit.

"Most certainly," we answered ; "it would be the very sinfulness of avarice to think otherwise."

"Why, sir," said the Hermit benevolently smiling, "thus considered, the loud-lunged city bawler of roots and flowers becomes a high benevolence, a peripatetic priest of nature. Adown dark lanes and miry alleys he takes sweet remembrances —touching records of the loveliness of earth, that with their bright looks and balmy odours cheer and uplift the dumpish heart of man ; that make his soul stir within him, and acknowledge the beautiful. The penny, the ill-spared penny—for it would buy a wheaten roll—the poor housewife pays for root of primrose, is her offering to the hopeful loveliness of nature ; is her testimony of the soul struggling with the blighting, crushing circumstance of sordid earth, and sometimes yearning towards earth's sweetest aspects. Amidst the violence, the coarseness, and the suffering that may surround and defile the wretched, there must be moments when the heart escapes, craving for the innocent and lovely; when the soul makes for itself even of a flower a comfort and a refuge."

The Hermit paused a moment, and then in blither voice resumed. "But I have strayed a little from the history of our small tradesman, Pugwash. Well, sir, Isaac for some three or four years kept on his old way, his wife still prophesying in loud and louder voice the inevitable workhouse. He would so think and talk of nature when he should mind his shop; he would so often snatch a holiday to lose it in the fields, when he should take stock and balance his books. What was worse, he every week lost more and more by bad money. With no more sense than a buzzard, as Mrs. Pugwash said, for a good shilling, he was the victim of those laborious folks who make their money with a fine independence of the state, out of their own materials. It seemed the common compact of a host of coiners to put off their base-born offspring upon Isaac Pugwash; who, it must be confessed, bore the loss and the indignity like a Christian martyr. At last, however, the spirit of the man was stung. A guinea, as Pugwash believed of statute gold, was found to be of little less value than a brass button. Mrs. Pugwash clamoured and screamed as though a besieging foe was in her house; and Pugwash himself felt that further patience would be pusillanimity. Whereupon, sir, what think you Isaac did? Why, he suffered himself to be driven by the voice and vehemence of his wife to a conjurer, who in a neighbouring attic was a sideral go-between to the neighbourhood—a vender of intelligence from the stars, to all who sought and duly fee'd him. This magician would declare to Pugwash the whereabout of the felon coiner, and—the thought was an anodyne to the hurt mind of Isaac's wife—the knave would be law-throttled.

"With sad, indignant spirit did Isaac Pugwash seek Father Lotus; for so, sir, was the conjurer called. He was none of your common wizards. Oh no! he left it to the mere quack-salvers and mountebanks of his craft to take upon them a haggard solemnity of look, and to drop monosyllables, heavy as bullets, upon the ear of the questioner. The mighty and magnificent hocuspocus of twelvepenny magicians was scorned by Lotus. There was nothing in his look or manner that showed him the worse for keeping company with spirits: on the contrary, perhaps, the privileges he enjoyed of them served to make him only the more blithe and jocund. He might have passed for a gentleman, at once easy and cunning in the law; his sole knowledge, that of labyrinthine sentences made expressly to wind poor common sense on parchment. He had an eye like a snake, a constant smile upon his lip, a cheek coloured like an apple, and an activity of movement wide away from the solemnity of the conjurer. He was a small, eel-figured man of about sixty, dressed in glossy black, with silver buckles and flowing periwig. It was impossible not to have a better opinion of sprites and demons, seeing that so nice, so polished a gentleman was their especial pet. And then, his attic had no mystic circle, no curtain of black, no death's head, no mummy of apocryphal dragon—the vulgar catch-pennies of fortune-telling trader. There was not even a pack of cards to elevate the soul of man into the regions of the mystic world. No, the room was plainly yet comfortably set out. Father Lotus reposed in an easy chair, nursing a snow-white cat upon his knee; now tenderly patting the creature with one hand, and now turning over a little Hebrew volume with the other. If a man wished to have dealings with sorry demons, could he desire a nicer little gentleman than Father Lotus to make the acquaintance for him? In few words, Isaac Pugwash told his story to the smiling magician. He had, amongst much other bad money, taken a counterfeit guinea; could Father Lotus discover the evil-doer?

"'Yes, yes, yes,' said Lotus, smiling, 'of course—to be sure; but that will do but little: in your present state—but let me look at your tongue.' Pugwash obediently thrust the organ forth. 'Yes, yes, as I thought. 'Twill do you no good to hang the rogue; none at all. What we must do is this—we must cure you of the disease.'

"'Disease!' cried Pugwash. 'Bating the loss of my money, I was never better in all my days.'

"'Ha! my poor man,' said Lotus, 'it is the benevolence of nature, that she often goes on, quietly breaking us up, ourselves knowing no more of the mischief than a girl's doll, when the girl rips up its seams. Your malady is of the perceptive organs. Leave you alone, and you'll sink to the condition of a baboon.'

"'God bless me!' cried Pugwash.

"'A jackass with sense to choose a thistle from a toadstool will be a reasoning creature to you! for consider, my poor soul,' said Lotus in a compassionate voice, 'in this world of tribulation we inhabit, consider, what a benighted nincompoop is man, if he cannot elect a good shilling from a bad one.'

"'I have not a sharp eye for money,' said Pugwash modestly. 'It's a gift, sir; I'm assured it's a gift.'

"'A sharp eye! An eye of horn,' said Lotus. 'Never mind, I can remedy all that; I can restore you to the world and to yourself. The greatest physicians, the wisest philosophers, have, in the profundity of their wisdom, made money the test of wit. A man is believed mad; he is a very rich man, and his heir has very good reason to believe him lunatic; whereupon the heir, the madman's careful friend, calls about the sufferer a company of wizards to sit in judgment on the suspected brain, and report a verdict thereupon. Well, ninety-nine times out of the hundred, what is the first question put, as test of reason? Why, a question of money. The physician, laying certain pieces of current coin in his palm, asks of the patient their several value. If he answer truly, why truly there is hope; but if he stammer, or falter at the coin, the verdict runs, and wisely runs, mad—incapably mad.'

"'I'm not so bad as that,' said Pugwash, a little alarmed.

"'Don't say how you are—it's presumption in any man,' cried Lotus. 'Nevertheless, be as you may, I'll cure you, if you'll give attention to my remedy.'

"'I'll give my whole soul to it,' exclaimed Pugwash.

"'Very good, very good; I like your earnestness, but I don't want all your soul,' said Father Lotus, smiling—'I want only part of it: that, if you confide in me, I can take from you with no danger. Ay, with less peril than the pricking of a whitlow. Now, then, for examination. Now, to have a good stare at this soul of yours.' Here Father Lotus gently removed the white cat from his knee, for he had been patting her all the time he talked, and turned full round upon Pugwash. 'Turn out your breeches' pockets,' said Lotus; and the tractable Pugwash immediately displayed the linings. 'So!' cried Lotus, looking narrowly at the brown holland whereof they were made—'very bad, indeed; very bad; never knew a soul in a worse state in all my life.'

"Pugwash looked at his pockets, and then at the conjurer: he was about to speak, but the fixed, earnest look of Father Lotus held him in respectful silence.

"'Yes, yes,' said the wizard, still eyeing the brown holland, 'I can see it all; a vagabond soul; a soul wandering here and there, like a pauper without a settlement; a ragamuffin soul.'

"Pugwash found confidence and breath. 'Was there ever such a joke?' he cried: 'know a man's soul by the linings of his breeches' pockets!' and Pugwash laughed, albeit uncomfortably.

"Father Lotus looked at the man with philosophic compassion 'Ha, my good friend!' he said, 'that all comes of your ignorance of moral anatomy.'

"'Well, but Father Lotus'——

"'Peace,' said the wizard, 'and answer me. You'd have this soul of yours cured?'

"'If there's anything the matter with it,' answered Pugwash. 'Though not of any conceit I speak it, yet I think it as sweet and as healthy a soul as the souls of my neighbours. I never did wrong to anybody.'

"'Pooh!' cried Father Lotus.

"'I never denied credit to the hungry,' continued Pugwash.

"'Fiddle-de-dee!' said the wizard, very nervously.

"'I never laid out a penny in law upon a customer; I never refused small beer to'——

"'Silence!' cried Father Lotus; 'don't offend philosophy by thus bragging of your follies. You are in a perilous condition; still you may be saved. At this very moment, I much fear it, gangrene has touched your soul: nevertheless, I can separate the sound from the mortified parts, and start you new again as though your lips were first wet with mother's milk.'

"Pugwash merely said—for the wizard began to awe him—'I'm very much obliged to you.'

"'Now,' said Lotus, 'answer a few questions, and then I'll proceed to the cure. What do you think of money?'

"'A very nice thing,' said Pugwash, 'though I can do with as little of it as most folks.'

"Father Lotus shook his head. 'Well, and the world about you?'

"'A beautiful world,' said Pugwash; 'only the worst of it is, I can't leave the shop as often as I would to enjoy it. I'm shut in all day long, I may say, a prisoner to brickdust, herrings, and bacon. Sometimes, when the sun shines, and the cobbler's lark over the way sings as if he'd split his pipe, why then, do you know, I do so long to get into the fields; I do hunger for a bit of grass like any cow.'

"The wizard looked almost hopelessly on Pugwash. 'And that's your religion and business? Infidel of the counter! Saracen of the till! However—patience,' said Lotus, 'and let us conclude.—And the men and women of the world, what do you think of them?"

"'God bless 'em, poor souls!' said Pugwash. 'It's a sad scramble some of 'em have, isn't it?'

"'Well,' said the conjurer, 'for a tradesman, your soul is in a wretched condition. However, it is not so hopelessly bad that I may not yet make it profitable to you. I must cure it of its vagabond desires, and above all make it respectful of money. You will take this book.' Here Lotus took a little volume from a cupboard, and placed it in the hand of Pugwash. 'Lay it under your pillow every night for a week, and on the eighth morning let me see you.'

"'Come, there's nothing easier than that,' said Pugwash, with a smile, and reverently putting the volume in his pocket—(the book was closed by metal clasps, curiously chased)—he descended the garret stairs of the conjurer.

"On the morning of the eighth day, Pugwash again stood before Lotus.

"'How do you feel now?' asked the conjurer, with a knowing look.

"I hav'n't opened the book—'tis just as I took it,' said Pugwash, making no further answer.

"'I know that,' said Lotus; 'the clasps be thanked for your ignorance.' Pugwash slightly coloured; for to say the truth, both he and his wife had vainly pulled and tugged, and fingered and coaxed the clasps, that they might look upon the necromantic page. 'Well, the book has worked,' said the conjurer. 'I have it.'

"'Have it! what?' asked Pugwash.

"'Your soul,' answered the sorcerer. 'In all my practice,' he added, gravely, 'I never had a soul come into my hands in worse condition.'

"'Impossible!' cried Pugwash. 'If my soul is, as you say, in your own hands, how is it that I'm alive? How is it that I can eat, drink, sleep, walk, talk, do everything, just like any body else?'

"'Ha!' said Lotus, 'that's a common mistake. Thousands and thousands would swear, ay, as they'd swear to their own noses, that they have their souls in their own possession: bless you,' and the conjurer laughed maliciously, 'it's a popular error. Their souls are altogether out of 'em.'

"'Well,' said Pugwash, 'if it's true that you have, indeed, my soul, I should like to have a look at it.'

"'In good time,' said the conjurer; 'I'll bring it to your house, and put it in its proper lodging. In another week I'll bring it to you; 'twill then be strong enough to bear removal.'

"'And what am I to do all the time without it?" asked Pugwash, in a tone of banter. 'Come,' said he, still jesting, 'if you really have my soul, what's it like—what's its colour; if indeed souls have colours?'

"'Green—green as a grasshopper, when it first came into my hands,' said the wizard; 'but 'tis changing daily. More; it was a skipping, chirping, giddy soul; 'tis every hour mending. In a week's time, I tell you, it will be fit for the business of the world.'

" 'And pray, good father—for the matter has till now escaped me—what am I to pay you for this pain and trouble ; for this precious care of my miserable soul ?'

" 'Nothing,' answered Lotus, 'nothing whatever. The work is too nice and precious to be paid for ; I have a reward you dream not of for my labour. Think you that men's immortal souls are to be mended like iron pots, at tinker's price ? Oh, no ! they who meddle with souls go for higher wages.'

" After further talk Pugwash departed, the conjurer promising to bring him home his soul at midnight, that night week. It seemed strange to Pugwash, as the time passed on, that he never seemed to miss his soul ; that, in very truth, he went through the labours of the day with even better gravity than when his soul possessed him. And more ; he began to feel himself more at home in his shop ; the cobbler's lark over the way continued to sing, but awoke in Isaac's heart no thought of the fields : and then for flowers and plants, why Isaac began to think such matters fitter the thoughts of children and foolish girls, than the attention of grown men, with the world before them. Even Mrs. Pugwash saw an alteration in her husband ; and though to him she said nothing, she returned thanks to her own sagacity that made him seek the conjurer.

" At length the night arrived when Lotus had promised to bring home the soul of Pugwash. He sent his wife to bed, and sat with his eyes upon the Dutch clock, anxiously awaiting the conjurer. Twelve o'clock struck, and at the same moment Father Lotus smote the door-post of Isaac Pugwash.

" 'Have you brought it ?' asked Pugwash.

" 'Or wherefore should I come ?' said Lotus. 'Quick : show a light to the till, that your soul may find itself at home.'

" 'The till !' cried Pugwash ; 'what the devil should my soul do in the till ?'

" 'Speak not irreverently,' said the conjurer, 'but show a light.'

" 'May I live for ever in darkness if I do !' cried Pugwash.

" 'It is no matter,' said the conjurer : and then he cried, 'Soul, to your earthly dwelling-place ! Seek it—you know it.' Then turning to Pugwash, Lotus said, 'It is all right. Your soul's in the till.'

" 'How did it get there ?' cried Pugwash in amazement.

" 'Through the slit in the counter,' said the conjurer ; and ere Pugwash could speak again, the conjurer had quitted the shop.

" For some minutes Pugwash felt himself afraid to stir. For the first time in his life he felt himself ill at ease, left as he was with no other company save his own soul. He at length took heart, and went behind the counter that he might see if his soul was really in the till. With trembling hand he drew the coffer, and there, to his amazement, squatted like a tailor, upon a crown-piece, did Pugwash behold his own soul, which cried out to him in notes no louder than a cricket's—'How are you? *I* am comfortable.' It was a strange yet pleasing sight to Pugwash, to behold what he felt to be his own soul embodied in a figure no bigger than the top joint of his thumb. There it was, a stark-naked thing with the precise features of Pugwash; albeit the complexion was of a yellower hue. 'The conjurer said it was green,' cried Pugwash; 'as I live, if that be my soul—and I begin to feel a strange, odd love for it—it is yellow as a guinea. Ha! ha! Pretty, precious, darling soul!' cried Pugwash, as the creature took up every piece of coin in the till, and rang it with such a look of rascally cunning, that sure I am Pugwash would in past times have hated the creature for the trick. But every day Pugwash became fonder and fonder of the creature in the till: it was to him such a counsellor, and such a blessing. Whenever the old flower-man came to the door, the soul of Pugwash from the till would bid him pack with his rubbish: if a poor woman—an old customer it might be—begged for the credit of a loaf, the Spirit of the Till, calling through the slit in the counter, would command Pugwash to deny her. More: Pugwash never again took a bad shilling. No sooner did he throw the pocket-piece down upon the counter, than the voice from the till would denounce its worthlessness. And the soul of Pugwash never quitted the till. There it lived, feeding upon the colour of money, and capering, and rubbing its small scoundrel hands in glee as the coin dropt—dropt in. In time, the soul of Pugwash grew too big for so small a habitation, and then Pugwash moved his soul into an iron box; and some time after, he sent his soul to his banker's—the thing had waxed so big and strong on gold and silver."

"And so," said we, "the man flourished, and the conjurer took no wages for all he did to the soul of Pugwash?"

"Hear the end," said the Hermit. "For some time, it was a growing pleasure to Pugwash to look at his soul, busy as it always was with the world-buying metals. At length he grew old, very old; and every day his soul grew uglier. Then he hated to look upon it; and then his soul would come to him, and grin its deformity at him. Pugwash died, almost rich as an Indian king; but he died, shrieking in his madness, to be saved from the terrors of his own soul."

"And such the end," we said; "such the Tragedy of the Till? A strange romance."

"Romance," said the Sage of Bellyfulle; "sir, 'tis a story true as life. For at this very moment how many thousands, blind and deaf to the sweet looks and voice of nature, live and die with their Souls in a Till?"

We answered not, but for some minutes followed the Hermit in silence, as he stept along Velvet-path; and the beauty of the place seemed to us to increase at every foot-fall. "What picturesque trees!" we suddenly cried, making a dead halt before two withered yews.

"Said I not," asked the Hermit, with a smile, "that Clovernook had its ruins?"

"There is a noble desolation in their dead trunks—their bare pronged branches. In their sapless nakedness, with flower, and leaf, and blade springing around them; they stand solemn mementos of the end of all things."

"True," answered the Hermit; "eloquently doth a dead tree preach to the heart of man; touching its appeal from the myriad forms of life bursting about it? Yes, the dead oak of a wood, for a time, gives wholesome check to the heart, expanding and dancing with the vitality around. In its calm aspect, its motionless look, it works the soul to solemn thought, lifting it upwards from the earth."

"There is a desolate grandeur in these old yews," we cried.

"Poor things!" said the smiling Sage, "they were cruelly killed; though, doubtless, murdered with the best intentions. Look at them, sir, in their majestic ruins; contemplate their magnificent nakedness; and then, sir, drop at least one tear for their untimely fate, poor withered victims of the fantasy of woman!"

"Of woman?" we exclaimed. "How, sir, of woman?"

"How many springs might they have flourished!" cried the Hermit, with humour curling his lip, and twinkling in his eye; how many autumns might they have borne their pinky berries!—how many pairs of little birds might have wedded and built in their boughs, and brought up rejoicing families!—but that woman, sir, fantastic, tyrannous woman, killed them in their prime; slew them in their green strength; made dead timber of their expanding greatness. Thus, sir," cried the Sage of Bellyfulle, "doth the female creature sometimes blight the budding hopes of man, and change the flourishing hero into a dead log. Poor ignorant souls! when they do worst murder, they call it love. They take a tough yew-tree in hand,

and working their charms upon it, turn it into very touchwood. They seize the hardest heart of stubborn man; and like a lump of dough, they toss it and thump it, and roll it out, and lump it together again; and now make fancy pie-crust of it—and now a homely dumpling. Oh, sir! whenever I feel my just anger at the ways of woman subsiding into unmanly softness, I come and look at these yews, and am stirred up again. The elephant, it is said, whets his tusks upon the gnarled trunks of trees. Upon these yews do I from time to time sharpen up my blunted indignation."

"Ha! as we thought. Then these yews bear a legend?"

"Yea," said the Hermit, with mock affliction; "most fruitful is their barrenness, most abounding in matter for contemplation are their nude and ghastly branches. Think you, sir, you have the heart to listen to the story?"

"At least, we'll try," was our answer: and the Hermit, affecting to wipe a tear from his eyes with the back of his broad hand, and then heaving a profound preparatory sigh, began the tale.

The Legend of Noses; or, the Old Maids' Green Husbands.

"The precise date of this history," said the Hermit, "is lost in one of the corner cupboards of time; but once it was, believe me, fresh as Eve's cheek; and still the unwrinkled spirit of truth dwells in it, making it as a tale of yesterday. Beautiful truth! never young and never old; but keeping, through all change and all time, its bloom and grace of Paradise, even to the Judgment.

"Well, sir, it is somewhere written in our Chronicles of Clovernook, that once upon a time two gentle maidens, by name Bridget and Veronica, came from the outside world, and entering the Valley of Naps, and taking their due rest at the Warming-Pan, and leaving what was dim and worn in their looks at the shrine of the Looking-Glass, they were at length, according to custom, admitted among the happy villagers. They never told their story; but it was plain they had jilted some poor innocent men out of their hearts, they were so wont to giggle, and laugh, and—not to speak it irreverently before the blooming faces of the whole sex—would rejoice like two successful pickers of pockets, or other flourishing malefactors. With all this, it was plain that they were sometimes not at their ease. It was marked of them that they would frequently wander to the very top of Gossip-Hill, and there, unmindful of the dewy grass, would drop themselves despairingly down, and sit watching and watching, with their faces toward the Valley of Naps, as though they expected some old acquaintance to arrive thereby. The simple-hearted chronicler who has set this down—what an innocent, milk-white goose must have bred his pen!—confesses that he knows not whom Bridget and Veronica could expect. Perhaps, says he, it may have been their brothers; perhaps their uncles. Of course, sir, it was the weak, foolish young men whom they had barbarously stript of their affections, and left to perish on the world's highway: these it was for whom Bridget and Veronica risked sciatica and rheumatic pains, nailed, as it would seem, hour after hour, upon the green-sward, looking for lost love.

"Ha, sir, here is a lesson, if the obstinacy of woman would only let her con it. Consider, sir; call to mind the barbarous impertinence of these two young women—when with murderous and triumphant eyes they walked the world—relentlessly dragging forlorn young men by their heartstrings through briar and brake; over flints, through gutters, and up dreary, winding lanes; still dragging them onward, onward, and now and then turning round, and with settled malice smiling, and showing their red, pulpy lips, and cruelest white teeth. Consider these homicidal maidens in their flaunting hours of conquest, stepping with mincing steps upon men's hearts, and deeming in their arrogance that they conferred much honour with the points of their toes. Ha, sir, such pictures make a bold man shudder at the tyranny of woman! In his virtuous indignation at such violent wrong, he feels that no punishment can revenge him upon the sex! And then, alas! sir, when he sees the poor forlorn things sorry for what they have done—when, victims to their own dreadful ignorance, like a babe that hath unwittingly let off a blunderbuss, they are laid prostrate, fairly knocked down by their own act, why, sir—philosopher and flinty-bosomed fellow as I am—I feel myself ashamed when I pity them."

"Yet, after all, it is a magnanimous softness," said we, falling in with the humour of the sage.

"And thus, sir, I have felt two tears roll adown my cheeks, when I have read the simple text of the simple chronicler, who relates that, night after night, Bridget and Veronica, still seated on the cold and colder grass, looked down into the Valley of Naps. Poor things! Every night their fancy believed that their lovers—the scolded, kicked, spurned dogs of other days—were with hopeful faces struggling towards the Warming-Pan, and would, with the morrow's sun, enter Clovernook. Alas, and alas! can we doubt that the young men had wedded themselves to kinder, more compassionate mates, and that oft, when their late mistresses were watching for them—watching and shivering in the night wind — they, snug fellows, were in their first sleep, close by their happy wives? Yet still would Bridget and Veronica, seated on the damp grass, feel that every night their hopes grew colder and colder; and then would they look up at the stars, and then would Venus seem to wink reproachfully down upon them, saying in that wink,—'Oh, Bridget and Veronica, what fools you were!'

"Time passed on—winter came—and Bridget and Veronica, warned by the sudden bite of rheumatic pains, watched no more on Gossip-Hill. It was plain, they thought, that their lovers were dead, otherwise they must have followed them. Why, sir, the men lived to be happy great grandfathers, and died somewhere about fourscore and five. Bridget and Veronica suffered themselves to sink gracefully down upon their sorrow as though it were a cushion; came here to Velvet Path, built a sort of comfortable nunnery, and were—if history is to be trusted in anything —the inventresses of muffins."

"It is well," said we, "when the afflictions of the heart can be so profitably diverted."

"Thus, sir," replied the Hermit, "private sorrows often become public luxuries. I never cut my wintry muffin—never see the butter shining like bright amber upon it—that I do not feel a gentle swelling of the heart towards Bridget and Veronica. Though, to be sure, it is especially the bounden duty of women to bend all their little energies to the one task of lightening and adorning masculine human life. Sir," said the Hermit with a grave look, "when we think what women have brought upon us poor men, they owe us all sorts of muffins."

"What they have brought upon us!" we cried. "How, sir? What do you mean?"

"All the pain, the trouble, and the weariness of sinful life. Now, sir," said the Hermit, "muffins and other such innocent delights go a great way to break the Fall."

"They built a nunnery, you say? Why, there is no stone, no brick of it," cried we.

"No; a great evidence," replied the Hermit, "of the antiquity of the legend. The less we find to prove the truth of a story, the greater should be our faith in it: such, sir, is the true antiquarian creed, and for myself, I am a devout believer. It is very true, the nunnery is gone; the oven to which mankind owes its first muffins is a thing of shadows. Nay, the said mankind with greasy chin, cheek-deep in muffins, may in its besetting ingratitude deny the very existence of Bridget and Veronica. What care I for that?—here, sir, in these old yews, their mournful' blighted husbands"——

"Husbands!"

"Husbands," repeated the Hermit; "I see and acknowledge them; even as in the sorrowful furbelow of a widow, I am made to acknowledge her departed spouse."

"Pray, sir, explain. What riddle is this? How came these dead, leafless trunks to be called the husbands of the maidens Bridget and Veronica? Their husbands forsooth!"

"Ay, sir," cried the Hermit; "and what was worse, their murdered mates. They stand, in their present desolation, gaunt witnesses of the volatility, the wilfulness of the sex. Yes, sir; they were stripped to the condition you see them in, and left upon the world. I will tell you—as, indeed, I have gathered it from the chronicler—how it was. For some years, Bridget and Veronica smiled graciously upon the villagers of Clovernook. Nevertheless, there was no man among them bold enough to return the courtesy. Yes, the women flung down their smiles, but no man with proper chivalry took them up. Well, sir, this could not go on. Bridget and Veronica felt, with increasing years, increasing philosophy; and precisely at the time that all men had resolved never to make them wives, they—stubborn souls!—determined not to wed the best, the noblest creature alive. The human heart has, of course, its pouting fits; it determines to live alone; to flee into desert places; to have no employment, that is, to love nothing; but to keep on sullenly beating, beating, beating, until death lays his little finger on the sulky thing, and all is still. This, the human heart, in some wayward fit proposes to itself, and thinks itself strong as adamant in its determination. Well, it goes away from the world, and straightway; shut from human company, it falls in love with a plant, a stone—yea, it dandles cat or dog, and calls the creature darling."

"True, sir; it is the beautiful necessity of our nature to love something."

"And so Bridget and Veronica—sympathising spinsters!—fell in love with these yew trees, and their love proved tragical to them; for the yews withered, died under the affection. Patience, sir, and you shall know the whole history. When the sisters came here—so runs the legend—these yews were brave, wide-spreading trees: freely flourishing, with Nature only tending them: broad robust fellows were they, when Bridget and Veronica cast their hearts upon them. And then the women, in the very fantasy of their passion, resolved to cut and trim the yews—to lop and trim them—into what they called shape. Doubtless, sir, you have seen in the outside world mummeries of the sort; have seen trees taken out of heaven's hand, and cut and trimmed into peacocks, pyramids, and nameless monsters? Now Bridget and Veronica—at least let us award them such praise—eschewed all other shapes, save the form of man; hence, had they the yew trees cunningly fashioned into two brave knights, with shield on arm and sword in hand. Thus did the maidens delicately show their yearning sympathies towards the sex; thus did they make manifest to all Clovernook the tenderness of their unrequited hearts. Poor souls! it would have been the worst surliness of man to grudge them such poor comfort: it was not for men who, in their own persons, had refused to become the living, fleshly protectors of Bridget and Veronica, to sneer at and condemn the vegetable substitutes, which, in the very meekness of misfortune the poor women had elected for their helpmates. If man will not become spouse to woman, is it just in him—is it even decent—to upbraid and make sorry mirth of the dear creature, if she wed herself to a yew, a cedar, a holly-bush? When, sir, I have beheld the virgin innocence of threescore fondling and feeding with tit-bits some wheezing, apoplectic Dutch pug, I have felt compassion, ay, heightened somewhat into admiration, for the poor soul, who, making the best of hard fortune—who, turning the slights of the world to the best account—has cheerfully, magnanimously, sunk the husband in the dog. When I have seen waning beauty begin to feed cockatoos and parrots, giving them sugar from her own mouth, I have felt for the hard condition of the feeder; have been moved to deepest pity for her strait. And thus, had I lived in the days of Bridget and Veronica, I could have cheerfully touched my bonnet to their yew-tree husbands, standing here in all weathers, knowing that it was not the fault of the poor maidens themselves—their first caprice excepted—that their spouses grew outside the house, when assuredly the dear women would have rather had them cosy at the fireside.

"Poor souls! The chronicler tells us that both Bridget and Veronica would, in the spring time, watch their shooting mates; would with softened hearts behold their tips of tender green, and strive to feel, with all the love of loving wives, renewed affection for their vegetable lords. In summer they would sit under the protecting shadow of their husbands, working needlework of such surpassing delicacy and brightness, that the degenerate women of our day never, even in day-dreams, see the like. Autumn, too, would find Bridget and Veronica constantly hovering near the knights; and in winter time, with the earth iron-bound, and icicles hanging from the eaves, sweet was it to the spirit of either wife to hear the robin red-breast, perched now upon the pummel of the knight's sword; now upon his casque; and now upon his shoulder, singing a song of hope to desolation."

"And yet, sir," we observed, "with all this tenderness, you say the women killed their growing husbands?"

"So says the chronicler," answered the Hermit, "and the evil happened after this manner. One winter the cold was terrible. Long was it before the breath of spring called forth the buds; and then, with all other things sprouting and shooting, the yew-tree knights showed not the green leaf. With a sweet superstition, Bridget and Veronica gave themselves up for lost; they believed that their lives depended upon the vitality of the yews: let the knights cease to bud, and they—their widows—must cease to breathe. They were even as the Hamadryads, and only held existence during the leafing of their lords. Long and sharp was the suspense. Day after day, the folks of Clovernook would call to know the best or worst. The husbands of Bridget and Veronica were especial favourites: middle-aged folks from their childhood remembered them; they had stood so boldly, valorously, through the storms of years; and then it had been so pleasant to watch the spring green steal upon the edge of their swords, to see it freshen up their shields, and break in their helmets. It was, too, an anxious time with the children of Clovernook to see the knights trimmed every autumn; to watch the cunning progress of the shears, as, in the artistic hands of the gardener, they worked in and out, above and below, reforming the wanderings of vegetation, and clipping vagrant and slovenly twigs into the proper trimness of knighthood. And at these clippings Bridget and Veronica were always present, directing with earnest and affectionate eye the operations of the steel; and, strange to say, every new autumn feeling a deeper love, a closer tie towards their pruned helpmates.

"At length the knights took new heart, and began to shoot. What a load was lifted off the hearts of Bridget and Veronica! their husbands—for by such fond names were the trees known to all Clovernook—were not dead; the pride and glory of the place still flourished. Again would the women sit and embroider beneath their shadows—again would they rejoice in the strength of their spouses. Fond human hopes—vain aspirations! It is true that the knights were alive and lusty; but frost—a mortal frost—had pinched both their noses; the prominent grace and beauty of the knightly countenance was gone; whatever else might shoot, the nose would never grow again!

"Now, sir, you or I might think a noseless knight far better than a knight defunct. Not so Bridget and Veronica: in the noble recklessness of their sex, they declared they would rather that their yew-tree husbands should have died outright, than stand through all weathers disgraced and noseless: there would have been dignity in total death; but to be maimed, disfigured, made ridiculous by calamity, it was insupportable. Misery they could endure, but not mockery.

"Well, sir, in this time of tribulation, the gardener hazarded a hope. If the head of each knight were cut closer in, a new nose might be brought out; but then to show a diminished head upon the old broad shoulders would look disproportionate—ungainly. If a nose must be had, it could only be produced by lessening the knight from head to heel; by reducing the whole figure; indeed, by bringing down what was grand and gigantic into the proportions of very common life. Thus a nose might be obtained; but was it not to purchase a nose at, in sooth, a most preposterous price?

"The gardener had said enough. He had given it as his opinion that the noses might be restored, and it mattered not to Bridget and Veronica—poor headstrong women!—how it was brought about. A nose they would have, come what might: the gardener was ordered to produce the noses, and to leave the rest to fate. The day was fixed; all Clovernook attended the solemnity; and day after day, with breathless attention, hung upon the movements of the gardener, who, on the third day, had so successfully dwarfed one of the knights, that he looked no bigger than page to his unclipped companion. But then the little fellow had a beautiful nose; and in the very completeness of his countenance brought out the degradation of his noseless co-mate. A dwarf with a nose was by far more preferable than a giant without; and the next day the gardener was set to work to finish his labours. A few days, and the husbands of Bridget and Veronica again displayed their full-grown noses to the sun. To be sure, they had lost immensely both in height and bulk; but each had gained a nose.

"And Bridget and Veronica were contented, happy women; they looked at their husbands, and felt grateful for their noses. Alas, and alas! they knew not, dear souls, that they had bought noses with lives. But so it was; the poor fellows had been cut so close to the quick, had been so shorn, that they could not survive the treatment of the shears. In a word, sir, the yew-trees died; the husbands of Bridget and Veronica gave up leafing, and in a short time became the bare, unprofitable things you see them."

"And the women, sir, the maiden-widows of the yew-tree lords?"

"They saw no second spring. Their husbands had ceased to shoot, and they dropt with the fall of their leaf. It is strange that the dead, sapless trunks should have stood so long; but," said the Hermit, "I take it, they are kindly preserved by fate as lasting records of woman's wilfulness. To me, sir, these dry logs are touching orators. Indeed, are they not preachers of great counsel to what we jocosely call the gentle sex?"

"Counsel! what counsel?"

"This," answered He of Bellyfulle; "that come what may, a woman should never risk the loss of a husband for the sake of his nose."

We will not venture to declare that the Hermit was too exhausted by the delivery of this truth to continue his talk; we think not. Nevertheless, we think that the story struck upon some chord in his heart, and made him for a time taciturn. Indeed, in the matter of noses, the Hermit could hardly escape suspicion; there was much equivocation in the centre of his face; was it a nose, or was it not? Had he been a sufferer from the caprice of the sex? We are afraid so.

With slow and silent steps we trod Velvet Path, following the silent Hermit. At length he paused before a barn. "There," said he, "there is another of our Clovernook ruins."

"A ruin!" we cried. "Indeed, it seems a goodly barn, in excellent, most perfect condition."

"True, sir, it seems so; and yet is it a ruin: what think you it once was? You cannot guess? Mint, hospital, or prison? Sir, it was a palace; a kingly abiding-place. Monarchs were crowned where now the folks of Clovernook thrash beans and wheat."

"Indeed!" we cried, and without a second thought were passing on, when the Hermit paused, and laid his hand upon our shoulder.

"Is not such a ruin," he asked, "of all antiquities most potent in its call to the heart and the imagination? To me it seems to hint the history of human kind. A palace and a barn! How far were men from the palace when they first laboured the earth! What changes of thought—what growth of energy—what subtlety—what calculation—what playing of man against man—motive against motive,—ere the king arose from among his fellows, and clay was deified by clay! What a leap from Adam's spade to Solomon's sceptre! Lingering here, dreaming on this spot, it seems to me that I can almost see the growth of the world; can almost behold the advance and struggle of the race, from the hour that all men tilled the earth, and tended flocks, to the first crowning of a king—a shepherd king! A palace and a barn!

"Now is it an abiding-place for men who, ages elapsed, are the things of ceremony; who, the pastoral days long gone, live a life of artificial wants, of artificial homage; whose best enjoyment is self-sacrifice to pomp; and now, time has run on, and the flail is heard where royal trumpets sounded. The sons of Adam quit fields and flocks to build a palace; the king is anointed; state keeps its court; death shoots his silent arrows; ages pass, the husbandman takes possession of the kingly palace, and winnows grain where monarchs held their sway. The palace turned to the barn seems to make goodly reparation. Adam gets his own again."

At length we reached the end of Velvet Path, which gently winding brought us to the door of the Gratis, the one hostelry of Clovernook. A few of the villagers were at the door, and greeted the Hermit with happy salutations; for, as they declared, he had been some time a stranger to them. "I should have come to the cell to-morrow," said an old man, whose turbaned head and expressive face made us curious to learn his history. "Who is he?" we asked of the Hermit, as he turned into the Gratis.

"We call him Mahomet," answered the Sage. "In the outside world he was a street-dealer in rhubarb."

"Mahomet! Surely not a Turk?" we cried.

"Why not?" asked the Hermit. "We leave the battles of creeds to the noisy, impudent world you come from. Here, in Clovernook, no man seeks to thrust himself between his fellow and Heaven."

"And have you a mosque in Clovernook? If not, where does your Turk worship?"

"Did I not, from Gossip Hill, point out the place? We have no other. There, all men, in their turn, communicate with the other world. There, all, in their turn, give place to one another; humility teaches them tolerance. No man here makes to himself a trading property in human souls; no man asserts for himself exclusive freehold in heaven. You are yet young amongst us, sir, and I see marvel at my words; you will find them true—true to the letter. Enough for the present; come, I'll show you to the parlour." We followed the Hermit, and in a few moments found ourselves in a large apartment, in which were about twenty persons seated in easy arm-chairs around a table. "My friend," said the Hermit, introducing us. All the company rose, and bowing towards us, cried "Welcome." They then took their seats, and instantly we felt as we were at home. As the villagers will, in due time, introduce themselves, we shall not now dwell upon their various characters. One man alone we will speak of. He looked so old, and yet so purified from the stains and marks of years, he seemed something more than mortal. His face was smooth and thin; pale, too, as moonlight; his eyes were of a clear, deep, piercing grey, and his snow-white hair, parted at the forehead, hung massively down his shoulders. His smile was sweet and guileless as the smile of a babe. A wreath of amaranth encircled his head. "Who is he?" we asked of the Hermit; and the Sage answered, "He is the oldest inhabitant."

At length, then, thought we, he is found; at length we see in the body that strange, mysterious person, whose experience at times amazes a young and thoughtless generation. The Oldest Inhabitant! How often do we hear his voice, like the voice of the cuckoo, coming to us from an unseen anatomy! What garnered knowledge must be his! What hard frosts has he chronicled! What times of scarcity—what days of fatness! Now doth he pass judgment upon gooseberries, declaring them to be the largest within his memory; now doth he the like service to hailstones! And now precisely doth he measure the height of floods, and now weigh the weight of spent thunder! There is something solemn, too, in the Oldest Inhabitant. He is the link between the dead and the living: in the course of nature, the next to be called from among us: his place immediately supplied by a second brother. Generations have gone, passed into the far world, and left him here their solitary spokesman—the one witness of the wonders that had birth among them. He remains here to check the vanity of the present, by his testimony to the past. Where would be all human experience without the Oldest Inhabitant? Yet, surely, we thought — in no way discouraged in our belief by the placid, gentle looks of the venerable man at the table — surely, the Oldest Inhabitant loves now and then to pass off a joke upon his ignorant juniors. Yes; antiquity likes a hoax, and often, by its officer, the Oldest Inhabitant, puts off a flam upon the unconscious and too confiding present. Such was our thought; and, in truth it was after well justified by the practice of the white-haired sage at the board. No little boy ever loved apples better than the Oldest Inhabitant loved a joke. In his time, he had written much for the newspapers.

"You were talking, Master Cuttlefish," said the Hermit, addressing a villager about fifty years old—a man with a remarkably blithe look, and ready manner. "Let us interrupt no tale," cried He of Bellyfulle.

"I was about to tell a little pen-and-ink experience; an incident that happened to me in my days of goose-quill," said Cuttlefish; from which I guessed that the speaker had driven the dangerous trade of author.

"There is little in the story; only, indeed, this much, that it taught me to have some tolerance even for those of the very worst report."

"Call you that little?" cried the Hermit, "why, 'tis one of the prime lessons of benignant man. Let us have the story. But say, is it not a little chilly to-night? Could we not bear some heat, eh?" Whereupon all called for a fire. The Oldest Inhabitant rang a silver bell that stood upon the table; when instantly, a face that—in short, one of those faces that coming suddenly upon startled man, fairly make him gasp at their alarming beauty — looked in at the door. "Sweetlips," said the Hermit, "a fire." The girl nodded and again closed the door; but ere we could recover ourselves she again entered the room, carrying a small faggot of cinnamon, which she laid upon the hearth, and stooped to arrange some logs for kindling. Think her thus occupied, whilst with dull, pale ink, we vainly try to draw her beauty. Sweetlips — for such in Clovernook was her name—had in her time been Maid of Honour at the English court: she was still unmarried, and it was said, had renounced the outside world, and become maid at the Gratis for the pure love of independence. Now, then, for her face. (The pen shakes in our hand, as though conscious of the hopeless task wherein we employ it.) Her face was beautifully fair—perfectly regular. It was a dream of a rapt sculptor, incarnate and living. Talk of music, the face seemed to breathe nothing but harmonious sprightly thoughts. Her pretty forehead was a tablet that seemed consecrated from the mark of age; Time, with his sacrilegious pen, should never mark one black line there. It was living ivory, defying wrinkles. Her lips! we almost faint, putting down the monosyllable — her lips, scarlet as blood, seemed pouting with unconscious wealth. Her eyes were of dark, heart-devouring hazel; with now a little love in them glancing timidly about, and now a merry little devil. Her hair—if it was hair—came bright and smoothly as light about her temples, and hung in lustrous curls at her neck. Then her form! What swelling ripeness! Her waist — we could see it; even the arm of the Oldest Inhabitant appeared for a moment as it would move towards it; her step seemed to strike music from the ground,—and then her foot!—what man, with the heart of man, would not have made that heart its cushion? Her voice, too! She spoke but three words, and for the next half-hour we were listening to some delicious music. Her dress was of the prettiest, quaintest fashion. She wore a white lawn boddice, laced with silken lace before; her gown was of dove colour; and her snow-white apron was curiously worked with fruits and flowers around the border; needle never wrought such delicate similitudes.

"Sweetlips," said the Hermit, "to-night I'll take my tankard." Whereupon the girl brought a large silver vessel of wonderful workmanship, and with an eloquent smile placed it before the Sage of Bellyfulle. He, with an affection almost fatherly, pinched her cheek, and in his cordial voice wished that, die when she would, it might be with a wedding-ring upon her finger.

"And now," said the Hermit, turning to Cuttlefish, "tell your story."

"There is but little story in the matter," said Cuttlefish; "it is nothing more than an incident of my goose-quill days."

"Begin," cried the Hermit of Bellyfulle; and immediately the speaker obeyed.

"It had been my ill fortune to be called a genius by my discriminating parents, who, hugging themselves in the possession of such a treasure, would constantly remark that I did nothing like any other boy. No matter what was the mischief, to their satisfaction I always contrived to give it an original turn that mightily recommended the misdoing. My brothers were dull, stupid fellows, who—I have heard my father declare it twenty times—would never make a figure in the world. No; it would be to me—his youngest and only hope—that the name of Cuttlefish would owe a lasting lustre. And this belief was as a religion to my poor mother. Dear soul! she once visited Westminster Abbey. She had not been five minutes in Poets' Corner, before she burst into tears, and was compelled to quit the place. At the earnest entreaties of my father, she, after a time, confessed the cause of her emotion. She could not, she said, look at the statues of the great people about her, without feeling that her dear Jacky—myself—would one day stand among 'em. She couldn't help, she said, the feelings of a mother; and they had been too much for her."

"Poor soul!" cried the Hermit. "It is something, to be sure, to the small pride of fleshly man to think of standing in an attitude of eternal marble for all comers of all generations; and yet the halfpence taken for the show do somewhat jingle a discordance. They bring the dead philosopher of the Abbey down to the living Spotted Boy of the caravan. 'Tis making Madam Fame the money-taker at a threepenny show. Perhaps," added the Hermit, with a smile, "'twas this thought that touched your mother into tears. Women jump like cats to conclusions; and the poor soul might have been shocked at the prospect of the copper fee."

"She might," said Cuttlefish, "I cannot say. It may, however, be some comfort to her spirit to know that I shall certainly escape the degradation. However, with this belief, that I should irradiate the name of Cuttlefish, my parents let me follow my own will, which at a very early age, developed itself towards doing nothing. And, indeed, throughout my life, that, my first bent, has ever held. My brothers, who were so very stupid, and therefore fit for nothing, were early placed in the world, and vindicated the truth of the parental opinion, by making their fortunes. They were dull blockheads, according to my father, and so became men of wealth and influence by the very force of their insensibility. Now I, who was brimful of genius, was to do everything by some extraordinary *hocus-pocus* dreamt of by my parents, but of which I, indeed, had not the remotest knowledge. 'Leave Jack alone,' would still be my father's cry; 'he 'll make his way in the world—how can it be otherwise ? he has such wit ! ' Well, after spending my little patrimony—and in its happy mode of outlay I may be permitted to observe I showed a genius for ten thousand a year—and after losing some year or two at bo-peep with bailiffs, you will judge of my destitution when I tell you that I found myself reduced to pen and ink. Oh, my friends ! there is a condition for the human animal. Consider the outcast. The maker of matches has a business ; nay, he is the possessor of a mystery. When he has made his matches, there they are — tangible wood and brimstone ; their merits open to the eye of cook and housemaid. conscious of the excellence of his ware, the match-maker may higgle gallantly for his price ; matches are things wanted in the commerce of life ; it is no difficult task to recommend their utility to the world, alive as it is to the worth of firelight. But books ! their worth is a matter of fancy, say of weakness, to the weaker part of mankind ; they have no standard value, none, at their birth. Hence, the unknown maker of a book—I speak especially of the time when I first sinned in ink—is a sort of gipsy in the social scale ; a picturesque vagabond, who somehow or the other contrives to live on the sunny side of the statutes. but is nevertheless vehemently suspected of all sorts of larceny by respectable householders. Shall I ever forget the uneasiness, the look of distrust from my landlady, when first the alarming truth fell upon her, that her three-pair room sheltered an author—or rather, an author in the shell, for as then I had hatched nothing, but was only sitting upon foolscap ? Good soul ! in a flutter of concern, she told me that that very room had been tenanted, for three long years, by an honest journeyman tailor, whose rent was regular as the Saturday. She looked at me from head to heel, and said she hoped that all was right; though I could perceive that she spoke in the very forlornness of the feeling. And, after all, the woman had truth upon her side. Her tenant tailor had an allowed business; was a recognised necessity by fallen man; was moreover one of a worshipful guild; an artificer whose cunning administered to human pride; whose handiwork was all-in-all to worldly triumphs. For instance, what would be a coronation without a tailor? What would be man, left to nothing more than sheepskins and parrots' plumes? Hence, the woman, in her strong sense of the decencies of life, acknowledged the vital use of the labourer of the needle; hence, when she learnt that I only dealt in pen and ink, she looked upon me as a sort of vagabond conjuror; a white wizard, whose very money—if ever she saw it—might be of doubtful origin. Shillings got out of an inkstand, she could hardly look upon as good mint coin: and for this reason, she could not comprehend how any man, by mere pen, ink, and paper, could give value received for the ready cash. Now the tailor's work was plain: a pair of breeches was a tangible thing; and spoke as it were common sense to the common sense of man and womankind. But authorship! Alas, how small to the breeches was a tale in verse!"

"Right, very right," said the Oldest Inhabitant. "I can remember in the days of my youth that people who dealt in pen and ink were made to live in a quarter of the city by themselves, for fear the rest of the inhabitants should catch their disorder. They were set apart, like folks in a fever. And it was good policy, that — very good. Notwithstanding, the disease would now and then spread. Indeed, a few foolish people went so far as to say that some babies were born with it." And here the Oldest Inhabitant gave a soft, flute-like chuckle, and then was silent.

"There I was, the born genius, as my begetters had averred," said Cuttlefish, "with wit enough to turn the world, destitute, penniless. Can I cease to remember the blank, hopeless look, with which, for an hour and more, I sat for the first time gazing at the blank paper! Then I rose from my wooden chair, and approached my chamber-window. I looked down into the street. There were coaches, and waggons, and drays, and carts — a thousand passing evidences of wealth and commerce. They all belong to somebody, said I. There — I would fancy — goes a physician in his carriage to sell Latin promises of health. There, the merchant to his counting-house; there, the lawyer to his office; there, too, a fellow cries rabbits; and there, at yonder corner, sits an old woman vending pippins. Look where

I will, I see no one who has not a wherewithal—a something to trade upon : real chattels, speaking to the dullest sense. And my stock in trade, thought I, with a despairing fall of the heart, is words ; mere syllables. Alas ! in the humility of my soul, I would have exchanged my richest stock for the slippers hawked by an old Levite past my door. Man can understand the worth of shoe-leather, when the best written foolscap shall be to him as waste-paper. Humbled by these thoughts, I returned to my chair ; and again gazing on the barren sheet, groaned with sorrow that I had been born the genius of my house. How I chided fate that had not made me like my brothers, dull fellows —fools ! "

" Come to your story," said the Hermit, impatiently appealing to his tankard. " What were the first doings of your maiden quill ? "

" You shall hear," said Cuttlefish. " I know not how long I sat with my skull clasped by my hands, trying with all my might to conjure my brains. However, I was at length aroused by a sharp knuckle rap at my door ; which then opened, and a gentleman — as he appeared to me — of great dignity of manner, entered the room. Pray, sir, I asked with growing confidence, for I saw the man could not be a bailiff, ' To whom do I owe the honour of this visit ? ' "

" ' As for my name, sir,' replied the stranger, with a melancholy smile, ' you know it well, though at present we will speak no further of it. You deal in pen and ink. I have a little job for you.' Saying this, the stranger laid aside his cloak, and displayed a very beautiful court-suit of black. His ruffles and cravat were of the most superb lace ; and his finger bore a diamond, which shone like a little sun in the room, drawing my eye with it wherever it moved. He was in every respect most richly appointed, yet was there nothing in his bravery of the coxcomb. He must be a cabinet-minister was my first belief ; and then I thought, perhaps, a quack doctor."

" Did you not ask his name ? " inquired the Hermit.

" Yes," answered Cuttlefish ; " but his first reply was only a smile, and a gentle shake of the head. Then he said, ' Oh ! never mind my name—you have heard of me, who shall say how many times ? ' Then he drew himself a chair, and took a seat by the fire, which, for lack of fuel, was fast dying in the grate. Seeing this, he took the fragment of a poker, for it was no more, in his hand, and asking with the blandest smile — ' Will you allow me ? ' — thrust it among the dying cinders. Instantaneously they blazed up, casting a brilliant light throughout the room. ' Bless me,' I cried, ' I thought the fire was out.' Whereupon the stranger, with the same sweet, yet strange smile, briefly remarked — 'Nothing like poking!' Then my visitor again looked melancholy—again was silent. At length, I observed—'You said, sir, something about a job: of what character? A piece of large history — or merely a little bit of private scandal?'

"'Not that — not that,' said the stranger, with slight emotion. 'I have suffered too much from the scandal of the world; have too keenly felt its wickedness to inflict it even upon a beggar. The truth is, I came here to hire you to pen my defence.'

"'Alas, sir!' I cried, 'what have you done?' The stranger merely shook his head, and drew a deep, deep sigh. 'With what are you charged?' I demanded.

"'With everything,' answered my visitor; 'that is with everything which the world calls wicked.'

"At these words, I leapt from my chair.

"'But, sir,' said the stranger, taking a handkerchief from his pocket, and passing it gently across his eyes, 'but, sir, though I do not wish to pass myself off as a pattern person, I am nevertheless cruelly slandered. Look here, sir,' and to my astonishment, my visitor drew a large folio from his coat-pocket. 'Be good enough to run your eye along that passage.'

"I did so, and read as follows:—'*Whereupon the old woman upon being questioned, confessed that the Devil had appeared to her in the shape of a black cat; that he promised her power over all things; and upon such promise, she became a witch. This happened at eleven at night, on the 24th of October, in the year* ——.'

"'Now, sir,' said the stranger, 'I am prepared to show the falsehood of every syllable of the old woman's story.'

"'*You* prove?' I cried; and then it immediately came into my mind that the unhappy gentleman was lunatic; and that it was his peculiar disorder—dreadful malady!—to believe himself no other than the Wicked One. Or, perhaps, thought I, he may be some poor hypochondriacal creature, who *will* be Beelzebub, and nobody else. I have heard of folks thinking themselves into teapots — of insisting upon lowering themselves to mean and base vessels; with this man, the disease may have worked ambitiously. Hence, poor creature! he may be a demon in his own conceit; and for a time, it may be humane to humour him. 'Then, sir,' I said to my visitor, 'there is no truth in the old gentlewoman's story? You were not bargaining with the witch on the night of——'

"'I can prove an alibi,' cried the stranger, with some vehemence. 'On that very night, I was closetted with a certain minister of state, whose name, by the way, I must beg leave to suppress — making a bargain between him and a noble duke, for a vacant garter. And yet, sir, you must remark the grossness of the libel. It is therein written that I appeared as a black cat; that I visited a wretched old crone in a miserable, degrading disguise, as though ashamed of myself. Infamous scandal, sir! I tell you, at that very time I was in my own person talking to one of the first men of the land; to a man of wealth and education; to one who had taken all sorts of honours at college; to one whose eloquence would lead away senates captive; whose keen logic would split hairs as a bill-hook would split logs. It was with him, sir—with him, the noble and enlightened — that I was chatting the whole of the night; and yet it is set down in that folio that I was wasting precious time, and forgetting what was due to myself, by masquerading it with some mumpish harridan as a black cat. Upon my word,' said the stranger, with a look of injury—'if men affect to despise my principles, they might respect my taste. The truth is, they commit all sorts of shameful deeds, and then lay the temptation upon my shoulders. Be it murder, or be it robbery of a hen-roost, I am called the wicked instigator of the enormity; when the assassin and the thief had nobody but themselves to thank for the evil-doing. It is, sir, upon this point that I wish the aid of your pen to set me right with the world.'

("It is clear, thought I, the man is mad. Poor fellow! But I'll hear his story out.")

"'Look here, sir,' said he, and again he dived into his coat pocket; again he pulled forth another large folio. 'Read this,' he said.

"Obediently, I took the volume, and read the passage to which the stranger's finger pointed; it ran thus—'Furthermore it was a common report that when any gentleman or lord came to see the Lord of Orne, they were entertained (as they thought) very honourably, being served with all sorts of dainty fare and exquisite dishes, as if he had not spared to make them the best cheer that might be. But at their departure they that thought themselves well refreshed found their stomachs empty, and almost pined for want of food, having neither eaten nor drank anything, save in imagination only; and it is to be thought that their horses fared no better than their masters. It happened one day that a certain lord being departed from his house, one of his men having left something behind, returned to the castle, and entering suddenly into the hall where they dined a little before, he espied a monkey beating very sorely the master of the house that had feasted them of late! And there be others that say that he hath been seen through the chink of a door, lying on a table upon his belly, and a monkey scourging him very strangely; to whom he should say,—Let me alone,—let me alone; wilt thou always torment me thus?'

"'Now, sir,' said the stranger, with a piteous look, 'you at once apprehend the monkey—you know for whom *he* is intended?'

"'It is no difficult matter to guess,' said I.

"'Upon my honour,' said the stranger, rising from his seat, and speaking with difficulty from emotion, 'upon my honour, whatever may have been the parts I have acted, I never yet appeared as a monkey; never, sir: the accusation is only one of the ten thousand falsehoods concerning me that men have invented to disguise the wicked deeds of their own free spirits. I ask, wherefore monkey? What should I have gained by so base, so low a disguise? Besides, why should I have taken the trouble to visit the Lord of Orne? Would it not have been more reasonable to wait till his lordship came to me?'

"Poor fellow! again I thought—he is very mad indeed!

"'Look here, again, sir,' said the stranger, and he took another, a smaller book, from his pocket. 'Read here: more scandal.'

"Taking the volume from his hand, I read as follows: 'There was a conjuror at Salzburg, that vaunted that he could gather all the serpents within half-a-mile round about into a ditch, and feed them and bring them up there; and being about the experiment, behold the old and grand serpent came in the while, which whilst the conjuror thought by the force of his charms to make it enter the ditch among the rest, he set upon and inclosed him round about like a girdle so strongly, that he drew the conjuror into the ditch with him, where he miserably died.'

"'The fellow's foot slipped,' said the stranger. 'May I die for ever if I had any hand in it: and then for the story of the serpent—but never mind; please to look at this.' With this the stranger took another folio from his pocket. Opening it upon the table, he pointed to a paragraph, and in the mildest voice, said '*Lege.*' I obeyed.

"'It was, in truth, a very lamentable spectacle that happened to the governor of Macon, a magician, whom the Devil snatched up in dinner-while, and hoisted aloft, carrying him three times about the town of Macon in the presence of many beholders, to whom he cried in this manner—Help! help! my friends! so that the whole town stood amazed thereat. Yea, and the remembrance of this strange accident sticketh at this day fast in the minds of all the inhabitants of the country; and they say that this wretch, having given himself to the Devil, provided himself with store of holy bread, which he always carried about with him, thinking thereby to cheat him; but, in truth, it served in no stead, as his end declared.'

"'What think you of that?' asked the stranger. 'Do you mark the folly, the useless labour they put upon me? Why should I have taken the trouble of carrying the governor three times about the town, when I had but to wait patiently for him—to bide my time, as you worldly people say, and he *must* have found me? Besides, what an ass does the scandal-monger make me! Is it likely that I should so forget my own interest as to make so public an example of my victim? Was that the way, think you, to draw other folks in? But there, there is the blundering of the chroniclers. Now, they call me all sorts of names to show my cunning; and now they make me do tricks that would disgrace a fool. Why can't they be consistent?'

"Yes; the poor man is certainly mad, again and again I said to myself; though, to confess the truth, when I saw him dive his hands into his pockets, and draw from them huge folios, I did, despite of myself, feel a strange fear—a creeping terror.

"'Read here!' he cried; ''tis, I know, a well-known story; yet read it, that I may, as your law-makers have it, explain.'

"Obediently I read.

"'Cornelius Agrippa, a great student in magic, and a man both famous by his own works and others' report, for his necromancy, went always accompanied with the Devil in the similitude of a black dog. But when his time of death drew near, and he was urged to repentance, he took off the enchanted collar from the dog's neck, and sent him away with these terms,—*Get thee hence, thou cursed beast, which hast utterly destroyed me.* And the dog was never after seen.'

"'What think you of that?' asked the stranger, with a slight sneer. 'Why there never was a greater flam. I knew Cornelius Agrippa very well.'

"'Indeed!' I cried, with increasing uneasiness, which nevertheless I endeavoured to conceal. 'What sort of a man may he have been?'

"'An excellent person; and for his dog—poor, faithful creature, it was the very fidelity of the animal that made him suspected by the hard-judging world: it was his very excellence that drew the scandal down upon him. The dog was incorruptible, and therefore, said men, the Devil was in him.'

"'And you knew Cornelius Agrippa?' I ventured again to ask.

"'That is,' answered the stranger, 'I wanted to know him. I knew his worldly miseries; I knew the contempt and lies that were visited upon him. I knew him an outcast from his fellows, spurned, hated by them; yet with a stout and constant spirit working for the lasting delights of those who persecuted him. I knew all this; and then, indeed, I tempted him, as I have tempted others of his tribe, with ease, with wealth, with all the sounding, hollow music of the world; but Cornelius laughed at me and my promises; took his staff, whistled to his dog, and trudged securely about the world, though at every footstep its dwellers would have stoned him. To be sure I had this delight. I found that his dog had brought a bad name upon his master: that was something.'

"'Poor Cornelius!' cried I.

"'Nay,' said the stranger, 'not for the evil that it did to Cornelius, but to those who reviled and hunted him. Do you not see—I *know* the truth—that the malice garnered in the souls of the persecutors is of more worth to me than the suffering of the persecuted? On one hand, I have wickedness and folly working in ten thousand hearts; that is sin by wholesale. Think you, when the martyr roasts at the stake, that it is his pains I delight in? No: it is the rejoicing of the men who have doomed him to the fate; it is the ferocious happiness of the multitude that makes my delight—it is—'

"I started from the stranger, who, recalled to himself by my agitation, mildly said—'To return to Cornelius Agrippa. To the last he rejected my friendship; and though it has passed from mouth to mouth among men that he and I did business together, it is not the truth. With his stout heart he spurned me; and so, I confess it, out of pure spite, I contrived to fasten a bad name upon his black dog.'

"'Poor malice, indeed,' I cried.

"'Why, yes,' said the stranger; 'but it has served its purpose; and, happily for my interest, there are few men—I mean the men in advance of the millions—who, by the beautiful falsehood of the world, have not all of them been charged with black dogs of some sort.' Saying this, the stranger lightly laughed.

"'And now, sir, may I ask your precise business with me?' I asked, all the while feeling that I was closeted with a madman; though at the same time not unvisited by strange thoughts, which, however thick and fast they came, I strove to master.

"'Have patience,' said the stranger, 'let me first supply you with your materials.'

"Hereupon the stranger, fast as he could, dipped both hands into his pockets, drawing therefrom folios, quartos—in truth, books of all dimensions, dropping them upon the ground, fast as hail-stones. As volume after volume fell, my blood became colder and colder, my hair stood up like wire; I sat in my chair motionless as though caught in a trap. With every moment I became more and more assured that I was giving audience to something supernatural, if not to the great fiend himself. In my confused horror, I asked myself, is he a doomed bookseller?—and then there was a remarkable intelligence in his face that gave no warranty of such a belief. At length, he seemed to have emptied his pockets, and stood up to the shoulders amid a heap of volumes.

"At last, I was able to stammer, 'And do all those books contain something about you?'

"'All; and ten thousand thousand more,' answered the fiend, for it was he indeed. 'It has still been the trick, the injustice of man, to shuffle off the rascalities of his nature upon my shoulders. For thousands of years have I borne this injustice; but I will no longer endure with meekness the sins that really and truly belong to man himself. I will no longer be made the stupid blundering hero of his fireside tales; no longer be turned into all shapes, foolish, base, and contemptible, to excuse his ends. No: though, to confess it, I hate printer's ink as I hate the glory of the sun, nevertheless I will, I must, fight man with his own dirty missiles; and will, therefore, print a book. It is, I am aware, a miserable strait to be reduced to,—a condition I little dreamt of when I was wont to dodge John Gutenburg about the streets of Mentz, and now and then stand beneath his eaves, listing the first creakings of his virgin press. I little thought that I should be brought to this pass; but so it is: my best weapon is now a fine, bold type. I have chosen you'—and here the fiend gave the nod of a patron—'to do my work.'

"With much labour did I assure the fiend, that I was wholly unworthy of the distinction. 'Why not take the job to some experienced quill?'

"'No,' answered the fiend, 'I would rather intrust myself to your simplicity. You are yet obscure, unknown; and will for a time be docile: I say for a time, for when the book shall have won you a reputation, you will be as insolent and as unmanageable as the rest of them. How many authors have I in my time set up! and how shamefully have they rewarded me!' Here the fiend ran over a bead-roll of names from Faustus to——but no matter, making out a strong case of thanklessness against one and all of them. 'Now you,' he said, 'will, I doubt not, finish what I want before you are quite spoiled. Here, as I said,' and he looked at the mountain of volumes, 'are a few of your materials. I will, as you proceed, bring you more.'

"I shuddered as I glanced at the crushing heap of books. 'A few of the materials !' I cried ; 'why, 'twill take me a life to go through them ; for, to say the truth, I am a slow reader.'

"'You'll find the labour nothing,' said the fiend, 'for I have doubled down the leaves at all the strong bits of scandal, and have pencilled my refutation in the margin. All that will be wanted from you, will be to put the matter into nice clear English, fit even for families. I could do it myself, but truly, I am not confident as to the purity of my language. I know something of all tongues, to be sure, quite well enough to speak ; but not, I fear, to write. I was once very well skilled in the dead tongues, but, for want of practice, I feel myself now and then at fault in them. My Coptic is quite gone ; but I have contrived to keep up my Hebrew talking with the stock-jobbers and money-lenders.'

"'And pray,' I ventured to ask, 'what is your favourite language of all the modern ?'

"'I talk a great deal of French ; indeed, without vanity, I may say it—I think I have the true Parisian accent. Not that I have had cause to neglect my English—oh, dear no ; I talk much English, and let me tell you, to some of the very highest people. I know, the prejudice runs that I delight in low company ; that my especial haunts are alleys, cellars, filthy places that even make me stop my nose to think of them. Having an interest in all human life, I certainly do at times visit such places, but I am just as often—nay, oftener—to be found in boudoirs, in statesmen's closets, and royal drawing-rooms. But to business. You will immediately get on with your work,' and the fiend pointed to the work.

"'Upon my soul,' I cried with vehemence, 'I had rather you took it somewhere else ; I shall make nothing of it ; you'll only suffer in my hands.'

"'But, look here,' said the fiend ; and opening a volume where a leaf was turned, he read as follows :—'The poor child, possessed by the Devil, vomited nothing but bits of glass, crooked pins, and died at midnight.' 'Observe my note upon this,' said the fiend. 'At the very time I am set down as doing this mischief upon some babe or suckling, I was—here I have written it—supping with Pope Leo the Tenth. And so throughout. You will find that my defence consists in a round of *alibis*. You will find—and it is in such spirit that I wish you to enforce the lesson—that what men falsely, fraudfully, foolishly call the instigation of the Devil, the temptation of the Devil, the prompting of the Devil, the work of the Devil, is no other than the antics of their own stupid, stubborn, headlong passion. It is thus the repentant pickpocket vows that it was I who crooked his finger for the theft—the murderer swears 'twas I who gave him his weapon—the adulterer, that 'twas I who burned in his veins, and made him spirit off his neighbour's wife. All lies, all wilful hypocrisy, fathered upon me, who am determined to put up with the calumny no longer; and for this reason, I shall be just as sure of those who do a wrong as if I bore the shame of tempting them to the iniquity. I shall have them still, with the proper credit of their coming to me unpressed, uninvited. Therefore, you will immediately from these and from the other books I will bring you, write my defence.'

"'Will you have it in a folio?' I faintingly asked.

"'Certainly not,' said the fiend; 'a small pocket-book for my money. Let me see; properly condensed 'twill make two nice volumes. I shall pay you handsomely. I will give you a hundred guineas for the work.'"

"And pray," asked the Hermit of Bellyfulle, "did you ever write the book?"

"Never," said Cuttlefish with emphasis, "never wrote a single line."

"And why not?" inquired the sage.

"Because, would you believe it," cried Cuttlefish with a roaring laugh, "because the Devil was ass enough to pay me fifty guineas in advance."

And now the meetings at the "Gratis" are no more. The hostelry itself is closed, found to be unlicensed by the prim propriety of the world. The Hermit has wandered we know not whither. Now and then his wise, happy, cordial spirit seems to visit knots of men gathered together, who sit the sometime jurymen upon the faults and follies of the earth; when he asserts the influence of his benevolent soul in the broad charity of the verdict. Yes; we must hug the belief that the Hermit is still a pilgrim among men, though, like some kaiser out upon a holiday, he travels unknown.

And Clovernook? It is gone; wiped out of the map of the earth. Even as some scene, bright with the hues of the land of dreams, the wonder-work of the golden-handed Clarksonius Stanfieldius, is blanked and blotted out, that its whitened web may bear, it may be, a cold lodging-house or a colder prison,—so is Clovernook but a place that was; a hamlet wherein fancy has loitered away a truant hour; loitered, to be called back to the hard bricks and mortar that carry rent-charge; to the real world gaol locked and grated by Mulciber Convention. A gaol wherein man, with his nose at the bars, *will* nevertheless see some sort of Clovernook beyond. No unjust sentence ; no keeper Fortune, no turnkey Circumstance can blind his brain to that fancy land. He will enjoy it : it is the heritage of the imperial soul of man : and therefore—though a thing of dreams—far more enduring than the bricks of Babylon.

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